EARLY BRICK BUILDINGS IN LINCOLNSHIRE
A GUIDE
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Lincolnshire County Council
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INTRODUCTION
The use of brick and tile was widespread in the Roman Empire, but in Anglo-Saxon times they had practically ceased to be used in Britain, except where robbed from ruins. It was not until the Middle Ages that bricks were again manufactured in England on any scale. It was largely under the influence of the Flemings—eastern coastal areas of England were most affected, and 13th and 14th century buildings using brick exist in Suffolk and East Yorkshire, particularly in Hull and Beverley.

The great age of brick, however, came in the 15th century when it became fashionable over wide areas of eastern England. It was not a cheap or everyday material, but it required expert techniques of the stonemason and it was only to be found in buildings of the rich and powerful, whether church, palace or school. Ralph, Lord Cromwell and Bishop William Waynflete were two such men under whose influence brick became a standard material.

Lincolnshire can boast many fine examples of 15th and early 16th century brick buildings, including Cromwell’s Tattershall Castle, one of the finest structures in the whole of England.

FURTHER READING:
The Pattern of English Buildings, by A. Clifton-Taylor, 1972 (especially ch. 9).

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BRICKMAKING
In most cases local clays were used, thus saving transport. Lincolnshire is well supplied with clays from the Jurassic series, such as the Kimmeridge and Eadestone. Kilns in Boston and on Edlington Moor (in Skidbrooke parish) supplied the building works at Tattershall.

Soft plastic clays which were easy to mould were mixed with sand or gravel to prevent excessive flaming and shrinking. Masses of clay were dug out, sifted to remove the larger stones, and allowed to dry. They were then pressed into wooden moulds, allowed to dry and then fired in kilns or clamps with brushwood.

BUILDING METHODS
Bricks were laid in courses with the best ones on the outside, and the mortared joints were staggered by the use of English or Flemish bond, which prevented excessive vertical cracks developing through the joints lining up. Headers are bricks laid with their narrow ends showing, stretchers are with the longest side outwards.

Decoration was achieved by creating deeper patterns with burnt ends (overfired bricks darker than the rest). Windows, doors and other details were often worked in stone, but cut and moulded bricks were sometimes used. This was extremely complex work and required a master craftsman.

The special skills connected with building in brick at a time when its use was far from common suggest that the same craftsmen worked on a number of projects, which may help to explain similarities in style. While some of the masters were clearly foreigners much of the work was undoubtedly carried out by local men.

TATTERSALL
Close to the River Bain, from which it drew water for its moat system, and c17 miles from Lincoln, lies Tattershall Castle11, built for Ralph Lord Cromwell in the mid 15th century. We can follow the years of building work through accounts which still survive, it probably took from 1432 until 1448.

The main feature is the great tower of four storeys and a basement, whose upper floors are reached by a spiral staircase in one corner turret. The brickwork was intended to be seen, not rendered over, and the west front was the ‘show front’. The east side, the modern approach, had a hall range close in front of it, which accounts for the three wooden doors and the beam slots let into the surface. The walls are some 12” thick in the basement and various sizes of brick are used throughout, including elaborate vaulting in shaped bricks in window embrasures and passages of the upper floors.

There are two other brick ranges between the inner and outer courts. That to the north-west of the tower probably represents stabling and servants quarters. On the east side is the ‘Guardhouse’, a small two-storey structure forming part of an unfinished range. It has a splendid timber king-post roof. In addition there are foundations of other ranges and a large part of the moat is revetted in brick.

The Castle was not Cromwell’s only building project. The stone-built church opposite the entrance was collegiate, and the College72 of priests lived in brick-built ranges to the south and east, which were excavated in 1972. A further building32 probably belonging to the College lies to the south of the Market Place and is open to the public. It is a rectangular structure with large doors in the west wall.

Next to the church is a row of almshouses34, successors to those built in 15th century, with brick and stone from their predecessors.

A few miles to the north lies a solitary fragment (the octagonal stair-turret only) of another brick tower known as ‘Tower on the Moor’30. It was built at about the same time as the Castle, perhaps as a hunting lodge. It was already being dismantled in 1472.

Cromwell’s death in 1466 occurred before the building work on the college was complete. His executor, Bishop William Waynflete, oversaw the completion. He himself was to be a great proponent of building in brick.

WAINFLEET SCHOOL
William Patten of Wainfleet was one of the great men of the 15th
SPALDING

Lying close to the River Welland at Spalding is the great town house of Ayscoughfee Hall, a building which has been much altered over the centuries. At its core lies the house of Sir Richard Aldwyn, said to date from 1429. It consists of wings to north and west, with a tower-like structure which was raised to its present height last century. The principal building material is brick and the spiral stair in the tower has a most interesting built-in handrail made of specially cut bricks.

Also in the town, in Priory Road, is a long brick range known as Abbey Buildings. It is now divided up into a series of private houses, but a number of medieval windows survive together with an original door near the west end. Little can now be made of its internal arrangements but it is clearly part of the very wealthy Spalding Priory, and is a useful reminder of how many medieval brick buildings were lost at the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

GOLTHO

Amid the fields to the west of Wragby lies the small brick church of St. George. The rest of the village has gone, through gradual desertion in the late Middle Ages and through the processes of modern agriculture. The manor site and part of the village were excavated between 1970 and 1974, giving a very detailed picture of life in a clayland village.

The nave is medieval, with cut and moulded brick in the window surrounds and west doorway. No date is known for its buildings but it has echoes of Tattershall Castle and may belong to the later 15th century; it seems to have belonged to the neighbouring Priory of Bulleton. The chancel, also of brick, is of 18th century date.

BARDNEY

The Parish Church in Bardney, originally within the Abbey precinct, was rebuilt on a new site in the village in 1434 because of the poor condition of its predecessor. The main body of the new church is in stone, but the opportunity to obtain bricks from the Edlington Moor kilns led to the use of the material for the chancel. The church windows to the south and east are in stone, but on the north side the door and window are in cut and moulded brick, and there is a certain amount of patterning with burnt ends in the lower courses. The door mouldings were originally rendered to make them appear like stone.

The decision to use brick for the chancel may have been a sudden one, for there is a very tidy transition between stone and brick on the south side. Large parts of Bardney Abbey, including the precinct wall, were rebuilt in brick in the 15th century, but little is to be seen today.

BOSTON

The Boston area is rich in early brick buildings, having a good local clay available, as well as a cosmopolitan population.

A kiln here served Tattershall Castle and undoubtedly local landlords took advantage of it.

Two tower-houses may be seen; Hussey Tower at the rear of the Grammar School and Rochford Tower just to the east in Skipper.
BRICK MOULDINGS
Cut and moulded bricks for a variety of uses. Drawn from examples from Belvoir Manor now in the City & County Museum. Scale ¼.

door in the long window. Not much detail survives, but it may have served as a school; it is now in the care of the Department of the Environment.
Tower on the Moat can be seen from the road leading onto the left and, on a hillside facing the B1191 and the Woolcholl Spa, but there is no public access.

Tour 2. SPALDING AREA
Visitors to the Lincolnshire Fenland can see a considerable number of early brick buildings on this and the following pages. In Church Gate, to the right of the River Welland from the Market Place is Ayscoughtree Hall, the grandest house in Spalding. It is a complex building with many later alterations, and houses an Information Centre, Office, and a Bird Museum. Not much can be seen from the outside because of the ornate plastered facades, but glimpses of the older parts can be seen from the ground. Line the Abbey Gardens at the rear.

Brickwork is not always visible from the outside of the houses, but are private property and the residents’ privacy should be respected.

A round trip taking in three brick churches can also be taken by following the A1073 to Crowland, the B1367 and B1196, and a minor road to Tydd St. Mary, and then the B101 through Long Sutton and via minor roads to Lutton, returning via Holbeach and Westpton.

Tour 3. BOSTON AREA
Boston’s rich heritage of brick buildings is unfortunately not easily seen. The Guildhall (now a Museum) in South Street, can be viewed both inside and outside during opening hours, but take care of the busy and very narrow road. Church House, the old court house, on the corner of High Street, is the door of the parish church. Opening hours can be viewed at any time. The Grammar School old building is not readily accessible as it lies back from the road a narrow lane just off the new Relief Road at the end of the new Bridge over the Witham. The same is true of the Castle, which lies on the edge of the Grammar School playing field. Old Row Road, Dividing the Grammar School from Rowley Road is an old brick wall which may have been the precinct wall of the Greyfriars, whose house stood close by.

Tour 4. LINCOLN AREA
The only substantial early brick building in Lincoln is the Chancery in Pottergate, which forms the north-east side of the Minster Yard. It is a brick facade to a much earlier building and can be viewed from the outside at any time. The use of brick here can only be a restoration of the old church. In the Middle Ages, the building was almost entirely built of local stone and timber. A number of vitrified bricks can be seen in the church, but they are not arranged in any pattern.

Follow the Skidby road (A168) out of Lincoln and turn left onto the one mile short Wragby Road turn right down a minor road. Both the old houses on the left are of brick, while the modern development on the right is of stone.

Gainsborough Old Hall

LINCOLN
Because of the availability of good building stone Lincoln has very little early use of brick. The Chancery in Pottergate is a large and very complex medieval house, with brick facades in the last decades of the 15th century, perhaps because the current Bishop of Lincoln had made use of brick at his palace at Buckden (Hunts.) and was promoting the new material.

Lincoln was once a great brick-producing city, but as the medieval abbey gave way to the cathedral, the demand for bricks declined. The most notable brick buildings are the medieval tower gates, such as the Old Gate, and the later town hall. The Old Hall dates from the mid-16th century and is a good example of the early use of brick in Lincoln.

1. St. Peter’s Gate
2. The Old Hall
3. The Old Gate
4. The Town Hall
5. The Guildhall
6. The Old Grammar School
7. The Old Cathedral
8. The High Bridge
9. The Castle
10. The Cathedral
11. The Old Hall
12. The Old Gate
13. The Town Hall
14. The Guildhall
15. The Old Grammar School
16. The Old Cathedral
17. The High Bridge
18. The Castle
19. The Cathedral
20. The Old Hall
21. The Old Gate
22. The Town Hall
23. The Guildhall
24. The Old Grammar School
25. The Old Cathedral
26. The High Bridge
27. The Castle
28. The Cathedral
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