



The oldest house. Old Manor Farm

### **Cottisford House**

About the year 1600 Eton College built a new house on the site of Barsis Place for their tenant in chief, sometimes called "The Manor House" and sometimes "The Mansion House". About a hundred years later it was demolished and the present Cottisford House was built by the then tenant, Lawrence Lord Junior.

In the present century it became the residence of Air Chief Marshall Sir Robert Brook-Popham, a major influence in the Royal Air Force. He lived here for some years until his death in 1953.

### **The Rectory**

The Rectory was originally two or three cottages connected together, and bears a builder's stone dated 1610. Signs of alterations and additions are amusingly apparent, and there is a well under the study floor.

The Rectory Barn has a stone dated 1651, and was no doubt used considerably when 81 acres of Glebe land were farmed by the Rector.

The Oxford Diocese sold the Rectory in 1976 to pay for new ministry in Milton Keynes, and Cottisford Rectory is now a private house.

### **The Hidden Village**

In "Larkrise to Candleford" Mrs. Flora Thompson records a standing joke about Cottisford, that a traveller asked the way there, only to be told that he had just walked right through it! Indeed, the charm of Cottisford lies in its plentiful trees and gardens, which half conceal the scattered houses; and its drawback is the lack of any clear centre or focal point. For this we have to thank Squire William Turner of Cottisford House, who in 1825 married Maria Meares, a beautiful Welsh gentlewoman worth £20,000. He immediately set to work to double the size of Cottisford House, rebuild the stables, and lay out fine pleasure gardens. To make room for these he demolished the lane which used then to run between Cottisford House and the church, and all the cottages on either side of it, and rebuilt them at a distance, well out of sight. J.C. Blomfield states that before Squire Turner reshaped the village there were houses on three sides of Cottisford Church, which was then a natural centre for the whole village.

Alas! Squire Turner overplayed his hand. He died eleven years later in 1836 at Bruges, Belgium, whither he had gone to escape his creditors.