



Cottisford House

### **Juniper Hill**

Cottisford was further scattered by the building of a separate hamlet on Juniper Hill. The first two cottages built there, to help the homeless poor, in 1754, at a total cost of £28.7.6!! They were paid for by a rate levied on Richard Eyre of Cottisford House, a retired judge from British India, the Rector the Rev. James Smith, and five other local landholders. Two more cottages were added shortly afterwards, and then for a hundred years Juniper stood still.

Then it was given a tremendous boost by the enclosure into farms of Cottisford Heath by an Act of Parliament dated 1854. This put an end to the notorious Cottisford Heath horse races, which took place every year after the hunting season, and it also dispossessed several squatters and smallholders, who were allowed to rebuild at Juniper. By 1900 the hamlet had thirty cottages.

The great attraction of Juniper was that all the cottages were free. The tied cottages on the farms were let for 3d. a week rent, but the tenants could be turned out at the farmer's pleasure. For their independence the men of Juniper paid one shilling a week rent, a stiff price for liberty when the agricultural labourer's wage was only ten shillings.

### **A Beneficent Rector**

The living at Cottisford was so poor that most of the medieval Rectors were absentees holding other livings in plurality. The earliest Rector whose portrait hangs in the Vestry, Francis Hodgson, B.D. Provost of Eton, never took a single Wedding or Funeral or Baptism during his ten years as Rector, 1842-1852. All was delegated to curates.

Things looked very different under his successor, the wealthy and public spirited Charles Sawkins Harrison, Rector of Cottisford 1853-1896, and of Hardwick also 1867-1896. Mr. Harrison restored and rebuilt the Rectory in 1853; built the School with the help of Eton College in 1856; and restored the Church with the help of public subscriptions in 1861.

But under the name of "Mr. Ellison" we are given a very different picture of him in "Larkrise to Candleford". The author, Flora Thompson, tells us that the only time she detected any emotion in his preaching was one occasion when he roundly berated his congregation for daring to vote liberal in a general election. We can well imagine how the Rector's