

In 1552 the church owned, among other things, a chalice, two copes and two vestments, three bells, a sanctus bell, and two handbells.⁶⁶ Today it has a silver chalice (1712) and paten (1732), inscribed as the gift of Katherine Bertie, and a silver flagon (1753), the gift of Bridget Launder.⁶⁷ The tower has a ring of three bells: the tenor is inscribed with the initials of William Watts of Bedford and dates from about 1590; the second and treble, also inscribed, were made in 1623 by Henry Farmer and James Keene, an unusual combination. The sanctus bell dates from 1715.⁶⁸

The registers date from 1539, but there are gaps from 1595-1603 and 1645-62.

NONCONFORMITY. In the Elizabethan period John Bourne of Chesterton Grange was a leading Roman Catholic. He was noted as a recusant in 1577,⁶⁹ and in 1583 was accused of having harboured five priests.⁷⁰ William Bourne, of the Wendlebury branch of the family,⁷¹ living then at Chesterton Grange, was noted as a recusant in 1599.⁷² There is no further record of recusancy.

Protestant dissent was never important. In 1676 there were two dissenters;⁷³ in 1738 there was a Presbyterian farmer and one other dissenter,⁷⁴ and in the 1850's two dissenting families went to chapel at Bicester and possibly more later.⁷⁵

SCHOOLS. About 1800 a school was opened for 10 to 20 children and in 1815, after the opening of another, about 51 children between the ages of four and ten received some instruction in reading.⁷⁶ In 1819 there were 36 pupils, most of whom were paid

for by Lady Jersey (d. 1867),⁷⁷ who by 1833 was contributing £12 a year to the support of a single school with 41 pupils.⁷⁸ Lady Jersey appears to have built by 1854 a school which was subsequently leased to managers by successive Lords Jersey.⁷⁹ There were 56 pupils in 1871⁸⁰ and 74 in 1906.⁸¹ The school was reorganized in 1933 as a junior school, and senior pupils were moved to Bicester. The numbers on the books were 31 in 1937 and 33 in 1954.⁸²

CHARITIES. It was reported in 1738⁸³ that at some unknown date Miss Drusilla Bowell of Bicester had left two-thirds of her estate to provide for the apprenticing of two poor boys every year. Great Chesterton—which shared the charity with Bicester and Wendlebury⁸⁴—was to nominate one boy every other year. Five pounds a year was to be used to assist boys, who had finished their apprenticeship, to set up in trade. The charity had been neglected for some years before 1738 and no more is heard of it.

By 1768 £30 had been given to the poor of Chesterton apparently by one of the Bertie family. The principal was then held by Peregrine Bertie of Weston-on-the-Green, and the interest was regularly distributed to the poor.⁸⁵ In 1786 the principal was said to have been £25 and the interest £1, but payments had then ceased for some years,⁸⁶ and inquiries made in 1824 failed to reveal any record of the charity.⁸⁷

In 1864 a certain person of unknown sex called Tredwell left stock worth £284 9s. 11d. to the poor of Little Chesterton. The interest amounted to £8 10s. 8d. in 1870.⁸⁸

COTTISFORD

THIS parish¹ lies about six miles north of Bicester and four miles south of Brackley in the north-eastern corner of Oxfordshire, which is enclosed by Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire.² In the 19th century it covered 1,506 acres of which 438 were part of 634 acres of 'intermixed lands' shared with Hethe. In 1932 the whole of these lands was awarded to Cottisford, increasing its area to 1,702 acres.³ The parish boundaries form an irregular parallelogram, tipped from north-west to south-east. Its southern boundary separating it from Hethe, Hardwick, and Tusmore is noticeably artificial and must have been drawn after the fields had been laid out: Cottisford's history has been closely connected with these parishes

from early times. The Northamptonshire border bounds it on the north-west. The parish forms a part of the Great Oolite belt (covered by fine drift gravel in the south) and lies mostly at 400 feet above sea-level; its soil is gravelly, with a stone subsoil.⁴ Much of the land was once heath, particularly on Cottisford Heath in the north and Hardwick Heath in the south.⁵

Apart from the Oxford-Brackley road which partly bounds it on the north-west the parish has no main roads. Minor roads connect the village of Cottisford with the Buckingham-Deddington road to the north, the Bicester-Buckingham road to the south-east, and the Oxford-Brackley road to the west. This last is

⁶⁶ *Chant. Cert.* 90.

⁶⁷ Evans, *Ch. Plate*.

⁶⁸ *Ch. Bells Oxon.* i. 88-89.

⁶⁹ C.R.S. xxii, 109 and n. 4.

⁷⁰ H. Foley, *Records of the English Province*, vi. 719; see also *Hist. MSS. Com. Salisbury MSS. IV.* 270.

⁷¹ C.R.S. xviii. 254. For family see *Oxon. Visit.* 316.

⁷² *Acts of P.C.* 1599-1600, 53.

⁷³ Compton Census.

⁷⁴ *Oxf. Dioc.* d 552.

⁷⁵ *Wilb. Visit.*; see above, p. 102.

⁷⁶ *Oxf. Dioc.* d 707, c 433.

⁷⁷ *Educ. of Poor*, 721.

⁷⁸ *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, 743.

⁷⁹ *Wilb. Visit.*; Wing, *Annals*, 54; *Vol. Sch. Ret.*

⁸⁰ *Elem. Educ. Ret.*

⁸¹ *Vol. Sch. Ret.*

⁸² *Inf. Oxon. Educ. Cttee.*

⁸³ *Oxf. Dioc.* d 552.

⁸⁴ See above, p. 55; below, p. 346.

⁸⁵ *Oxf. Dioc.* d 558.

⁸⁶ *Char. Don.* ii. 989; cf. below, p. 352.

⁸⁷ *12th Rep. Com. Char.* 301.

⁸⁸ *Gen. Digest Char.* For the Tredwell family see above, p. 99.

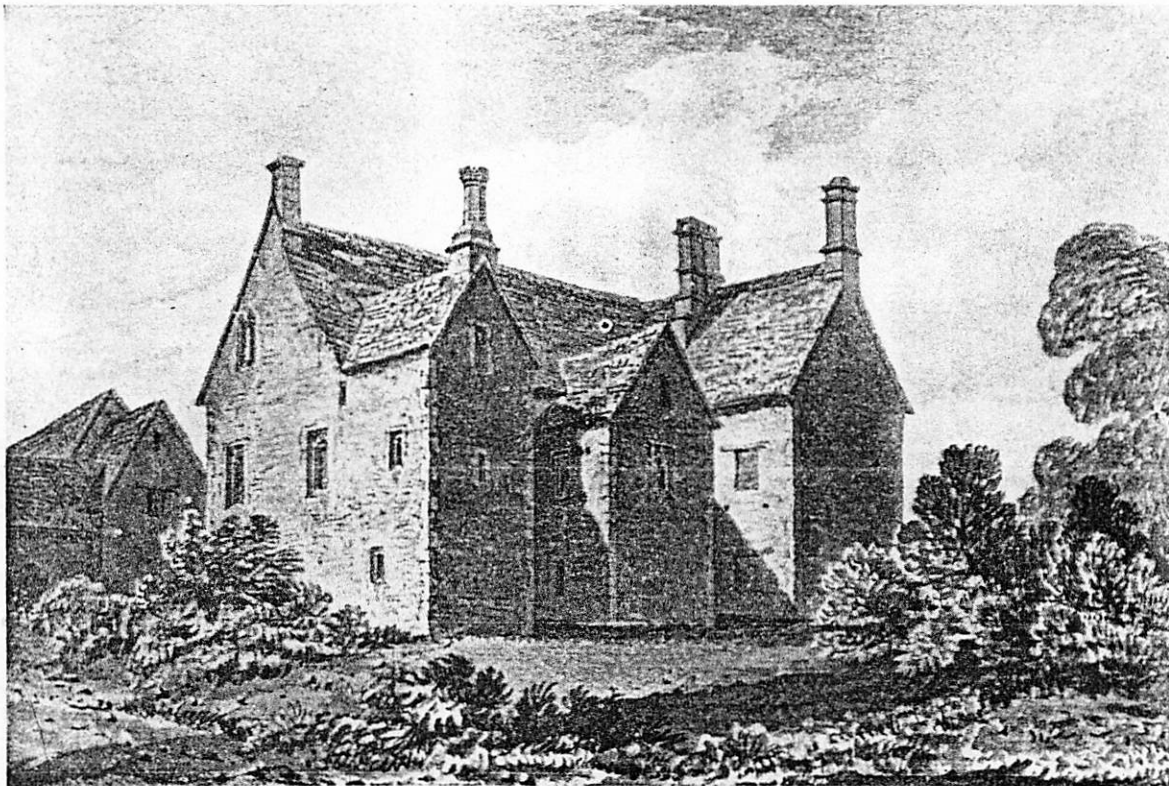
¹ The author wishes to thank Mrs. Marjorie Chibnall for lending her transcripts of the manorial accounts of Bec Abbey, Mrs. Gweneth Whitteridge for transcripts of documents of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and Mr. N. Blakiston for his typescript of the Eton College Record.

² O.S. Map 6", xi, xvii (1884); 25", xi. 13, 14, 15 (1881); xviii. 1, 2, 3, 6; *Census*, 1881.

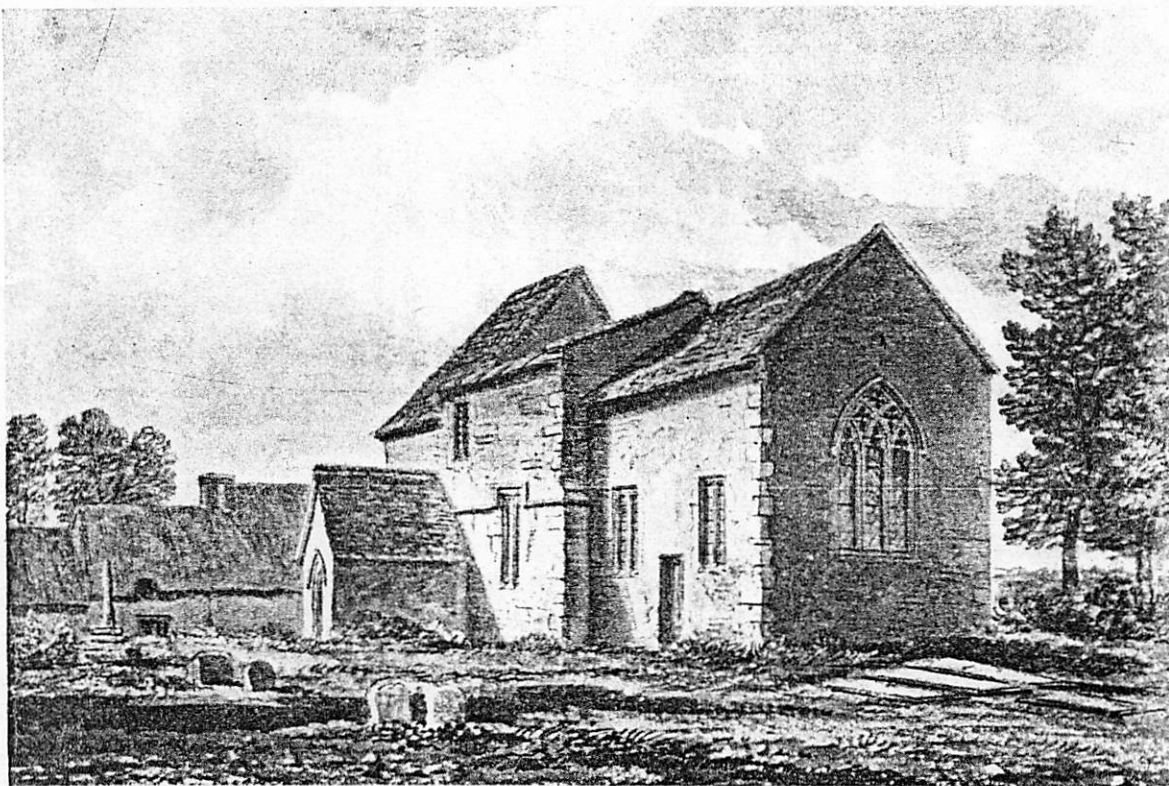
³ *Census*, 1931; *Oxon. Review Order* (1932).

⁴ G.S. Map 1", xiv NE.; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939).

⁵ Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).



View of Manor Farm in 1823



South-east view of the church in 1825

COTTISFORD

described in a 13th-century deed as 'the royal way leading from Oxford to Brackele', while the first appears as the 'way leading from Cotesford to Brackele'.⁶ The road west from the village was described in 1358, when its course was changed, as 'a way leading from Coteford to Sulthorn' (i.e. Souldern).⁷

The village of Cottisford lies towards the south-east on the banks of the Crowell stream, where there was once a ford: hence the name Cotts-ford. In early 13th-century charters it is named 'Wolfheysford' or 'Urfesford'.⁸ The village was described by Peshall in the 18th century as 'lying in the form of a street from e(ast) to w(est)', and this layout is shown in Davis's map of 1797.⁹ The church and manor-house (now Cottisford House) are depicted lying, as they do today, north of the road, but divided by a lane running north and south with a number of cottages standing to the north of both. Both lane and houses to the north have now gone as the result of alterations in the line of the roads made in the late 1820's by William Turner, the tenant of Cottisford House, when he was laying out pleasure-grounds. At the same time he pulled down all the houses which stood round the church and planted the site with the trees still growing there.¹⁰ The incumbent's return of 1831 notes that 'the village once stood round the church and that the cottages are now removed to a distance'.¹¹ A drawing of 1825 of the church from the south-east shows cottages lying west of the church,¹² and Blomfield records that the churchyard was closed in by cottages on three sides.¹³ He adds that the road which Turner stopped used to continue in a southerly direction towards Hethe and that traces of it could be seen in dry weather in the field in front of the Rectory. If this was so Davis did not show it on his map. Blomfield's further statement that Turner substituted an east to west road for the old north to south one seems clearly an exaggeration.¹⁴ What Turner evidently did was to build new cottages to replace those he had pulled down along the already existing village street.

The old village lay mainly west of the ford. Here is the Rectory and College Farm (formerly Manor Farm), a stone 18th-century house of two low stories facing on to the road. East of the stream, now crossed by the road, is Manor Farm, a medieval house. Numerous fishponds to the south are shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1881. Opposite, on the north of the village street, was the village pond and stocks.¹⁵ In the 17th century the hearth-tax returns of 1665 show that besides the Rectory, with 4 hearths, there were 2 substantial houses with 6 and 7 hearths.¹⁶ There was some expansion in the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. In 1738 twelve cottages, a farm-house, and a gentleman's house (i.e. Cottisford House) were recorded.¹⁷ In the 19th century the comparatively new hamlet in the north-west

of the parish at Juniper Hill developed, and Cottisford itself spread up the hill to the east.¹⁸ The village school was built there in 1856,¹⁹ and on the road to Hethe to the south there is a row of six semi-detached model 19th-century cottages. Farther south still is another row of early 19th-century ones. The water-tower near the school is of unknown origin, but must belong to this period. In 1868 Cottisford's cottages were described as 'very bad to very good' and some were said to be 'not fit for human habitation'.²⁰ Six semi-detached council houses have been built since 1946.²¹

The village has two houses of considerable interest. One is Manor Farm, possibly the De Cotesfords',²² which used to be assigned to the 13th century, but is now considered to be a 'very doubtful example of the period'.²³ It more probably dates from the 14th century. The house, composed of uncoursed rubble, consists of an oblong block lying north-south, subdivided into two compartments, probably a first-floor hall and a solar, with two smaller blocks of unequal size projecting from the west wall, with a lean-to between them. There is also a later south wing added when the original building was remodelled in the 16th century. Most of the windows have been modernized, except two in the north wall of the solar, each of one trefoil-headed light, which were probably inserted in the 15th century. In the north gable above is a two-light attic window of c. 1200, but this does not appear to be in its original position. The most interesting part of the house is the north-west projection, which contains what was probably a garde-robe opening from the solar. Within there is a projecting semicircular stone trough with a drain. Above the gable rises an octagonal chimney shaft, which has been assigned to the 14th century, but which may be of later date. Sixteenth-century roof timbers can be seen in the north gable; the roof is of Welsh slate. The interior has been much modernized, but the fittings include a 16th-century fireplace in a ground-floor room. In the early 18th century the farm-house was leased by the Fermors to William Topping for £51 10s.²⁴ Its farmer tenant and economy in the 1880's have been described in Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise*. The house was owned by the Ramsays until 1857, when it was bought by Lord Effingham.²⁵ It changed hands again in 1898 and in 1944 when Col. M. L. Mostyn purchased it. It is now leased to Twyford Mills Ltd. and used as a hostel for their apprentices.²⁶

As Cottisford manor between 1100 and 1885 was first in the hands of Bec Abbey and later in those of Eton College, there was no resident lord of the manor.²⁷ The abbey's lands were administered by the Prior of Ogbourne (Wilts.), who had a bailiff at Cottisford. There was a grange there at least as early as 1306.²⁸ An indenture of 1325 gives details of what was evidently a substantial building: a hall, chamber,

⁶ E.C.R. no. 29.

⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1358-61, 4.

⁸ *P.N. Oxon.* (E.P.N.S.), i. 207; E.C.R. nos. 10, 20.

⁹ *MS. Top. Oxon.* c 307, f. 119.

¹⁰ *Blo. Cot.* 23, 39.

¹¹ *Oxf. Dioc.* b 38.

¹² See plate opposite.

¹³ *Blo. Cot.* 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 39.

¹⁵ *O.S. Map 25"*, xvii. 2 (1881).

¹⁶ *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 208.

¹⁷ *Oxf. Dioc.* d 552.

¹⁸ *Census*, 1851.

¹⁹ See below, p. 115.

²⁰ *Agric. Rep.* (1868-9), 352.

²¹ *Inf. Ploughley R.D.C.*

²² See below, p. 106.

²³ For an account of this house see M. E. Wood, *Arch. Jnl.* cv (1950), *Supplement*, 57-58. For an illustration see plate opposite.

²⁴ *O.R.O. Reg. of Papists' estates.*

²⁵ *O.R.O. Land tax assess.*; *Bodl. G.A. Oxon.* b 85b (57).

²⁶ *Inf. Col. Mostyn.*

²⁷ See below, pp. 105, 106

²⁸ *E 179/161/8.*

kitchen, and granary. There was a close and garden attached, a fishery worth 1s. and a dovecote worth 3s.²⁹ When the property passed to Eton in the middle of the 15th century, the college's lessee probably took over the house.

At the end of the 16th century or at latest before 1606 the college built a new house for its tenants, which is variously designated the manor-house or the mansion house.³⁰ About a century later, the tenant Laurence Lord, junior, built another house, described in the renewal of his lease in 1707 as a 'good house'.³¹ This house, now called Cottisford House, is built of coursed rubble with ashlar quoins; it is of two stories with attic dormers in a hipped roof. The south front has a doorway with a broken pediment and a modillioned eaves-cornice. Early 19th-century alterations and additions were made by William Turner, who obtained the lease in 1825,³² and the house has since been well restored. In the garden, to the north-east, are the remains of a large brick dovecote, which was mentioned when the estate was sold in 1773. It was square and is now roofless.

It has been stated that Cottisford House was on the site of Barsis Place, which was once the home of the De Bar family.³³ The house was let by Ogbourne in 1375 and 1400 to Edward Metteley; it later came into the possession of the Copes of Hanwell, who sold it in 1620 to Eton College.³⁴

The parish has long been noted as good hunting country, and there is a fine painting by Ben Marshall (1767-1835)³⁵ of Mr. Fermor's hounds on Cottisford Heath. Annual horse-races were held there at the close of the hunting season in the early part of the 19th century.³⁶

The parish has had interesting associations. The priors of Ogbourne who acted as agents for the Norman Abbey of Bec, the lord of the manor, were frequent visitors to their grange in the village, and so were the priors of Goldcliff (Mon.) and Steventon (Berks.). After the manor had passed to Eton College several Oxfordshire families of lesser gentry were lessees or freeholders, notably the Samwells, Ardens, and Pettys.³⁷ In the 18th century the Eyres were another resident family of note. James Eyre (1734-99) was Recorder of London and finally Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. The Copes of Hanwell and the important Roman Catholic family of Fermor were also landowners in the 17th and 18th centuries, though never resident.³⁸ Sir Henry Savile, Provost of Eton, appears to have taken a particular interest in the college estate and much correspondence between him and Sir Anthony Cope (1548?-1615) of Hanwell has survived.³⁹ Robert Petty, Anthony Wood's grandfather, and also his nephew Maximilian were Eton College's tenants.⁴⁰ Charnell Petty of Tets-

worth and later of Stoke Lyne was the lessee of Barsis Place.⁴¹

A memorable 19th-century resident was Flora Thompson, the daughter of a stonemason of Juniper Hill and the author of *Lark Rise* (1939) and its sequels, *Over to Candleford* (1941) and *Candleford Green* (1943). She was born in the hamlet in 1877 and educated at Cottisford village school. Her books are important social documents for life at Juniper ('Lark Rise') and Cottisford ('Fordlow') in the 19th century.⁴² In the 20th century Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, who so much influenced the formative years of the R.A.F., resided at Cottisford House for some years before his death in 1953.⁴³

Juniper Hill, the hamlet in the north-west of the parish, dates from the second half of the 18th century and mainly developed in the 19th century. The name is derived from the prevalence on the surrounding heath in the past of the common juniper shrub.⁴⁴ Two cottages were built there in 1754, but the hamlet mainly developed after the inclosure of the common fields in 1854. By the end of the 19th century there were about 30 cottages, mostly built on lands ceded as 'squatters' rights.⁴⁵ Its inn, the 'Fox', came into existence between 1852 and 1864 and figures in Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise* as 'The Waggon and Horses'.

There are a number of outlying farm-houses in the parish: the Warren, which was a 17th-century house built for the warrener and used in the early 19th century as a hunting-box by Sir Edward Lloyd, Bt.,⁴⁶ has recently been pulled down; Heath Farm, Glebe Farm, and Coneygre Farm are 19th-century buildings, probably erected after the inclosure in 1854. The 'Conygree' Farm mentioned in 17th-century records was in the village.

MANOR. In 1086 COTTISFORD, assessed at 6 hides, was held of Hugh de Grantmesnil by Roger d'Ivry,⁴⁷ who had married Hugh's eldest daughter Adeline. He died in exile a few years later, having forfeited his English lands.⁴⁸ Adeline, who survived until about 1110,⁴⁹ gave Cottisford to Bec Abbey in Normandy.⁵⁰ Later evidence shows that her grant included all the land of the township with the exception of two small estates. One of these was held by Adeline's sister Rohais, wife of Robert de Courcy, the son of Richard de Courcy and an important landowner in Oxfordshire. In about 1125, with Robert's consent, she gave it to Bec.⁵¹ The other, a hide of land, had been given before 1081 by Hugh de Grantmesnil with Cottisford church to St. Évroul Abbey in Normandy,⁵² but in 1167 this too was acquired by Bec.⁵³ Many of Bec's English manors, including Cottisford, were administered from its cell at Greater Ogbourne (Wilts.),⁵⁴ and it became

²⁹ E.C.R. no. 40.

³⁰ Blo. Cot. 19-20.

³¹ MS. Dunkin 439/3, f. 126.

³² Blo. Cot. 23.

³³ Ibid. 22; see below, p. 107.

³⁴ E.C.R. nos. 42, 45, 64-68.

³⁵ Reproduced in H. Wyndham, *A Backward Glance* (1950), opp. p. 73.

³⁶ e.g. MS. Dunkin 438/7, f. 99.

³⁷ See below, p. 106; cf. below, p. 316.

³⁸ See below, p. 107.

³⁹ e.g. see E.C.R. no. 181.

⁴⁰ Wood, *Life*, i. 50; E.C.R. no. 256.

⁴¹ See below, p. 107.

⁴² For a letter from Flora Thompson to Greening Lamborn see Bodl. 247126 e. 250(a).

⁴³ 21 Oct. 1953, *The Times*.

⁴⁴ Blo. Cot. 37.

⁴⁵ See below, p. 113, and Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise*.

⁴⁶ For the warrener see below, p. 111.

⁴⁷ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i. 427.

⁴⁸ Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Le Prévost, iii. 25 n. 1; for Roger see *V.C.H. Oxon.* v. 60.

⁴⁹ *Chron. Abingdon*, ii. 72.

⁵⁰ *Bk. of Fees*, 831; *Rot. Hund.* (Rec. Com.), ii. 44, 837.

⁵¹ Ordericus, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 25 n. 1, 359, 361.

⁵² Ibid. iii. 22, 24; charter of Wm. I to St. Évroul.

⁵³ *Select Doc. of Eng. Lands of Bec*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Camden Soc. 3rd ser. lxxiii), 17.

⁵⁴ Marjorie Morgan, *Eng. Lands of Bec* (1946), I, 43, 45.

customary to regard the Prior of Ogbourne, the effective administrator of Cottisford, as the lord of the manor.⁵⁵

It has been conjectured that there was a second manor in Cottisford, held in the second half of the 14th century by Sir Roger de Cotesford.⁵⁶ Thirteenth-century records, however, show that there was only one manor, the whole of which was held by Bec.⁵⁷ The surname 'De Cotesford' was borne, though not consistently, by a number of families living in the parish from the late 12th century onwards, who were tenants of the abbey and not lords of the manor.⁵⁸ In 1279 Bec held 'Manerium de Coteford cum tota villata'.⁵⁹

The last Prior of Ogbourne to hold Cottisford was William de St. Vaast, nominated in 1364.⁶⁰ In 1404 Ogbourne, an alien priory, with its manors was granted by Henry IV to his son John, later Duke of Bedford, Thomas Langley, later Bishop of Durham, and William de St. Vaast for the duration of the war with France.⁶¹ The prior died soon afterwards and by 1422 Thomas Langley had surrendered his rights to the Duke of Bedford, who continued to farm the manors of the priory, which had been suppressed in 1414.⁶² The duke died in 1435 and in 1438 Henry VI granted Cottisford to his uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.⁶³ In 1441, however, the king gave Cottisford to his new foundation of Eton College.⁶⁴ Edward IV confirmed his predecessor's grant in 1462.⁶⁵

In the late 14th century the Prior of Ogbourne had adopted the practice of leasing Cottisford manor. Edward Metteley, who held a lease of land⁶⁶ in Cottisford as early as 1375, obtained a lease of the manor for nine years in 1391.⁶⁷ This was renewed in 1400, for the lives of himself and his wife Margaret.⁶⁸ Eton College continued the practice, and its leaseholders came to be termed lords of the manor. In 1450 the estate was leased to Robert Arden for a term of 20 years and in 1469 for 60 years to John Samwell. He was apparently Arden's brother-in-law and the bailiff of Cottisford and Fringford (where Eton also owned a small property). John Samwell died before 1505, since from that year until 1512 his son Roger paid rent to the college. Roger Samwell's widow Eleanor was the leaseholder in 1513-14, and her second husband Thomas Danvers of Banbury paid the rent from 1515 to 1521.⁶⁹ Thomas and Eleanor Danvers then quitclaimed their rights in the manor of Cottisford, and in 1522 the lease returned to the Arden family in the person of John Arden (d. 1535), grandson of Robert Arden. In 1542

the leaseholder was his son, John Arden (d. 1556), who in his turn was succeeded by his son, a third John Arden, who obtained a renewal of the lease.

Some time after 1570 Arden sold the remainder of his lease to (Sir) Thomas Ridley, who became headmaster of Eton in 1580 and to whom the college granted a new lease for 21 years in 1587.⁷⁰ In the following year, however, the manor was leased by the college to Robert Calcot of Byfield (Northants), to hold for the lives in survivorship of John and James Arden, sons of John Arden, and of John Calcot his own son.⁷¹ Calcot was dead by 1606, and in that year a lease of 21 years was granted to Robert Wilcox of Hilmorton (Warws.).⁷² The next leaseholder was Richard Stephens, who was tenant from 1627 to 1641,⁷³ when George Austin of Coleman Street, London, became the lessee.⁷⁴ Austin devised the lease to his wife Frideswide, who married as her second husband Valentine Walton of Great Stoughton and Somersham (Hunts.). In 1650 he sub-let to John Hart of Chilton (Bucks.), for nine years from 1651. Walton and his wife surrendered the lease of the manor to Eton in 1658,⁷⁵ and Hart obtained a lease in 1660 for the customary 21 years.⁷⁶ In 1664 Hart's widow married Edward Andrews of Lathbury (Bucks.), and they obtained a new lease in 1671.⁷⁷ In 1675 Andrews surrendered his rights and those of his wife in Cottisford to Laurence Lord of Fritwell, who received a new lease in 1676.⁷⁸ He died at Fritwell in 1708. His eldest son Laurence resided at Cottisford during his father's lifetime, and continued renewals of the lease of the manor until 1731. He died in 1743.

In 1739 the manor was leased to Richard Eyre, who was 'a power in the village life, and even after his death it was long before he was forgotten'.⁷⁹ He was a son of the Revd. Richard Eyre, Prebendary of Salisbury, undoubtedly a member of a younger branch of the well-known Wiltshire family, and had spent 28 years in the East India Company's service.⁸⁰ His lease was renewed in 1752 for 20 years,⁸¹ but in 1760, the year before his death, a lease of 20 years was granted to Thomas Berney Bramston of the Middle Temple and Skreens (Essex), and Sir James Eyre (1734-99) of Gray's Inn.⁸² James Eyre, a Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was a nephew of Richard Eyre, being the son of his elder brother Thomas, also a Prebendary of Salisbury.⁸³ Bramston's and Eyre's lease was renewed in 1766 for 20 years.⁸⁴ But Richard Eyre's widow, Martha, daughter of Christopher Clitherow of Boston House, Brentford, continued to live at Cottisford until her death in

⁵⁵ e.g. *Feud. Aids*, iv. 169; *Tax. Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), 45; for details of the organization and administration of the bailiwick of Ogbourne see Morgan, *Eng. Lands of Bec*, 38-73.

⁵⁶ *Blo. Cot.* 19-20; for the family, see above, p. 60; below, p. 336.

⁵⁷ *Bk. of Fees*, 831; *Rot. Hund.* (Rec. Com.), ii. 837.

⁵⁸ e.g. *Bracton's Note Bk.* ed. Maitland, iii. 45; *Fines Oxon.* 72, 86; E.C.R. box 8: Cottisford ch.

⁵⁹ *Rot. Hund.* (Rec. Com.), ii. 837-8.

⁶⁰ Morgan, *op. cit.* 126.

⁶¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1401-5, 466.

⁶² *Ibid.* 1416-22, 441; Morgan, *op. cit.* 131; *Dugd. Mon.* vi (2). 1016.

⁶³ *Cal. Pat.* 1436-41, 189, 304.

⁶⁴ *Rot. Parl.* v. 47.

⁶⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1461-7, 73.

⁶⁶ E.C.R. no. 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* no. 43.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* no. 44.

⁶⁹ *Blo. Cot.* 15.

⁷⁰ E.C.R. no. 46; *Blo. Cot.* 15-17; for the Ardens see *Oxon. Visit.* 207.

⁷¹ E.C.R. no. 56.

⁷² *Ibid.* nos. 62, 70, 71.

⁷³ *Ibid.* nos. 72-74.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* no. 75.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* no. 76.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* no. 79; cf. *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 208.

⁷⁷ E.C.R. no. 81.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* nos. 84, 86, 88.

⁷⁹ *Blo. Cot.* 22 n. 1.

⁸⁰ M.I. in Cottisford church; for the elder Richard see Foster, *Alumni.*

⁸¹ E.C.R. no. 89.

⁸² *Ibid.* no. 90.

⁸³ *D.N.B.*

⁸⁴ E.C.R. no. 91.

1772, and in 1773 the lease was sold by auction by order of her executors.⁸⁵

The Cottisford lease was bought for £7,300 by the Revd. John Russell Greenhill, the Rector of Fringford (d. 1813). He was succeeded by his son, Robert Russell Greenhill, M.P., of Lincoln's Inn,⁸⁶ who held the estate until 1825, when William Turner, a member of the Irish bar, obtained a lease from Eton College for 17 years and renewed in 1829 for 20 years.⁸⁷ Turner, however, became involved in money difficulties, sold the remainder of his lease, and went abroad.⁸⁸ In 1836 Eton leased the manor to Susanna Ingram of Warminster, widow of Christopher Ingram of Stapleford (Wilts.).⁸⁹ The lease was transferred in 1842 to James Edwards Rousby.⁹⁰ Rousby died in 1848, and in 1850 Eton granted a lease to his son Edwards Rousby and John Kendall of Towton Hall, near Tadcaster, his executors.⁹¹ Edwards Rousby died in 1875, and his son Edwards Richard Kendal Rousby succeeded to the lease. In 1885 he bought from Eton College the manor-house and Warren farm. He was succeeded by his son, F. R. Rousby, who later sold his family property to Sir Robert Brooke-Popham.⁹² The rest of the college's estate was sold in 1921 and 1922.⁹³

LESSER ESTATES—In the early 13th century a hide in Cottisford belonged to the abbey of St. Pierre-sur-Dives (Calvados), which had enfeoffed William le Bar.⁹⁴ William gave his houses and at least two virgates to Biddlesden Abbey (Bucks.),⁹⁵ and in 1232 leased another virgate to Bec.⁹⁶ In 1237 St. Pierre granted Biddlesden William's whole estate, with his homage and service.⁹⁷ William's son Ralph had succeeded him as Biddlesden's tenant of the hide by 1247.⁹⁸ Some time after 1266⁹⁹ Biddlesden quitclaimed Ralph's estate to Bec for 13½ marks,¹ and in 1279² and in 1289 Ralph was holding the hide of Bec for a rent of 13s. 5d. a year.³ A Robert le Bar, perhaps his son, occurs in 1282 and 1295,⁴ and a John le Bar in 1310 and 1345.⁵ The last contributed to the tax of 1327 for his Cottisford lands.⁶

The Arden family held a freehold estate of 4 yardlands in the 16th century, which appears to have been once Bar's holding.⁷ It probably descended in the family with its leasehold property from the reign of Henry VIII until the end of the 16th century.⁸ It was doubtless this 4 yardlands which was leased in

1619 with Barsis Place to Charnell Petty of Tetsworth.⁹

Another freehold estate of 6 yardlands, held by John Samwell, was sold to the Fermors of Somerton in 1527 and was later conveyed to John Arden,¹⁰ but Thomas Fermor (d. 1580), lord of Hardwick manor, had pasture rights and an estate in Cottisford after this sale.¹¹ The Arden estate was purchased by Sir Anthony Cope of Hanwell in or before 1606.¹² An estate of 360 acres was held by Sir Humphrey Ferrers in the 16th century, for which it was said 'he acknowledgeth nothing but to the king'.¹³ Ferrers was lord of Hethe and there can be little doubt that this estate followed the descent of that manor. Both were bought by Sir Rowland Lytton and sold to Sir Anthony Cope before 1606.¹⁴ It is possible that when the Copes alienated Hethe manor some time after 1637, the Cottisford estate was acquired by the Fermors. At all events the family, then established at Tusmore, was holding 23 yardlands in Cottisford by the early 18th century.¹⁵ The Fermor estate followed the descent of Tusmore from at least 1717 until 1857, when it was sold to the Earl of Effingham.¹⁶ After inclosure the estate covered 616 statute acres.¹⁷ Between 1898 and 1920 it was split up and sold.¹⁸ Although the Fermor estate covered nearly half the parish and their farm-house was called Manor Farm there is no other evidence for the existence of a second manor in Cottisford. It is probable that from early times much of Cottisford's land had always been attached to Hethe manor or to Hardwick, where the Ardens were lords of the manor in the 15th century, and the Fermors in the 16th century. Herein probably lies the explanation of the 635 acres of 'intermixed lands' of which 196 acres were shared with Hethe.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY.¹⁹ A clue to the character of Cottisford's land is given by its field names, first recorded in the early 13th century. Heath and fen predominate. For instance, there is Widemor, Mareweye, Nordmoresende, Nordesorteheth, Cotes-thorn, Blakelond (used elsewhere in this part of Oxfordshire of poor soil), and Eylesbrech. La Brueria presumably refers to the area later known as Cottisford Heath.²⁰

Domesday Book states that there was land for 10 ploughs: in demesne there were 3 plough-teams, but

⁸⁵ Ibid. no. 172 and see below, p. 112.

⁸⁶ Ibid. nos. 100, 101.

⁸⁷ Ibid. nos. 104, 106.

⁸⁸ Blo. Cot. 23.

⁸⁹ E.C.R. no. 108.

⁹⁰ Ibid. no. 110.

⁹¹ Ibid. no. 114.

⁹² Inf. Lady Brooke-Popham, Cottisford.

⁹³ Inf. Eton Coll.

⁹⁴ E.C.R. no. 36.

⁹⁵ Ibid. nos. 24, 25, 38; *Fines Oxon.* 139.

⁹⁶ E.C.R. no. 26.

⁹⁷ Hist. MSS. Com. 9th Rep. App. I, 357: abstract of doc. not in E.C.R.

⁹⁸ *Fines Oxon.* 139, 149; E.C.R. no. 36.

⁹⁹ E.C.R. no. 38.

¹ Ibid. no. 35.

² *Rot. Hund.* (Rec. Com.), ii. 838, where he appears as Ralph 'de Thar'.

³ *Doc. Bec Lands*, ed. Chibnall, 125; for the rent of a mark and a penny cf. E.C.R. no. 38.

⁴ St. Bart.'s Hosp. deed no. 1378; E.C.R. no. 39.

⁵ St. Bart.'s Hosp. deeds nos. 1383, 1381.

⁶ E 179/161/9.

⁷ E.C.R. no. 294.

⁸ Blo. Cot. 16-18.

⁹ E.C.R. no. 66.

¹⁰ Ibid. nos. 54, 55.

¹¹ See below, p. 111. No lands in Cottisford are mentioned in his will: *R.C. Families*, i. 26.

¹² E.C.R. no. 179.

¹³ Ibid. no. 294.

¹⁴ E.C.R. nos. 176, 179; and see below, p. 175.

¹⁵ O.R.O. Reg. of Papists' estates, pp. 47, 92; see below, p. 336.

¹⁶ O.R.O. Reg. of Papists' estates, p. 47; Bodl. G.A. Oxon. b 85b (57); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1864).

¹⁷ Bodl. G.A. Oxon. b 85b (57).

¹⁸ Ibid. c 317 (7): *Sale Cat.* 1898; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1920).

¹⁹ This section is contributed by Mary Lobel. It is based on material supplied by Miss Margaret Toynbee (see above, p. 103, n. 1.) and on material at Eton College examined by permission of the Provost.

²⁰ E.C.R. nos. 25, 26, 30, &c. The following names also occur: Wowelond, N(H?)uperhinland, Oppingland, Walchamstede, Fuwelesdene, Lutleslade, Sortebrodelond, Gorefurlong, Hakesdefurlong, Fulridi, Ulfesford, Lilliesfurlong, Portwei, Stocwei (these place names from E.C.R. have not been printed in *P.N. Oxon.* i. 207).

land for four. The 10 villeins (*villani*) and 5 bordars presumably shared some plough-teams, though no figure is stated. Forty acres of pasture are recorded. The value of the estate had risen steeply from £5 to £8 since 1066.²¹

By the end of the 12th century, if not earlier, the parent village must have thrown off a colony at Cotes—'apud Cotes in parochia de Cotesford'²²—possibly on the east side of the Crowell Brook, for there are several references in the records to its land and to a family of De Cotes. A William de Cotes, for example, was granted $\frac{1}{2}$ hide of land in Cotes between 1194 and 1197,²³ and in 1279 the Abbot of Bec was said to hold 3 virgates there.²⁴ The early 14th-century bailiffs' accounts also mention separate meadow in Cote and 'Cotefeld'.²⁵

During the 13th century there were many other developments. Progress on the abbey's manor is recorded in a custumal of about 1245²⁶ and in the Hundred Rolls survey of 1279.²⁷ In both records the number of customary virgaters and half-virgaters is 13 and 2 respectively, but in 1279 one cottar instead of 5 is recorded.²⁸ A category of tenant unknown to the Domesday account appears at both dates: there were 5 free tenants. One, William le Bar, was a member of a family which was to be of local importance for some generations. Before 1232 he had granted land (29 a.), houses, and pasture for 240 sheep to Biddlesden Abbey.²⁹ Another was Roger le Blunt (or *Blundus*), who in 1226 had granted the abbey over 5 virgates of land.³⁰ His son John in 1279 held 4 virgates of the abbey by the service of holding the court twice a year. The usual practice on Ogbourne's manors was for the prior, or his steward, or an itinerant bailiff to go the rounds of the manors, holding courts after Easter and again after Martinmas.³¹ In 1245 all the free tenants had held of the abbot, but by 1279 only three were doing so or four including Richard Poure, whose position is uncertain; the abbot was himself a sub-tenant for half a virgate. At least 48 virgates were under cultivation compared with 40 (land for 10 ploughs) in 1086. The Cottisford virgate was 20 field acres,³² so at least 1,060 field acres or perhaps about 700 statute acres were being cultivated. Actually as the Hundred Rolls account appears to be incomplete the extent was probably greater.

According to the custumal of 1245 the virgater owed a rent of 5s. and a number of works in addition. He must plough an acre at the feast of St. Martin for 'garsherth', whether with his own plough or another's. He must also plough an acre for 'cherset'.

²¹ *V.C.H. Oxon.* i. 427.

²² E.C.R. no. 33.

²³ *Ibid.* no. 1. For the family, which can be traced down to 1266, see also *ibid.* nos. 28, 32, 38. For refs. to land in Cotes or 'le Cote', see *ibid.* nos. 28, 29, 31-33; *Bracton's Note Bk.* ed. Maitland, iii. 45-46; *Fines Oxon.* 80.

²⁴ *Rot. Hund. (Rec. Com.)*, ii. 837-8.

²⁵ e.g. E.C.R. nos. 145-8, 150. Cf. references to Cote Field in the 17th cent.: see below, p. 110.

²⁶ *Select Doc. of Eng. Lands of Bec*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Camd. Soc. 3rd ser. lxxxiii), 97-99.

²⁷ *Rot. Hund. (Rec. Com.)*, ii. 837.

²⁸ Cf. extent of 1324 when 3 cottars paid rents of 1s. each; 13 villeins 5s. each; half-virgaters were not recorded and free tenants paid 23s. 5d.: E 106/8/5.

²⁹ E.C.R. no. 25.

³⁰ *Fines Oxon.* 76.

³¹ Marjorie Morgan, *Eng. Lands of Bec*, 60.

³² E.C.R. no. 256.

³³ Cf. John Smith, whose works were worth 7s. a year,

At the spring sowing, he had to do a day's harrowing and a day's weeding; he had to mow the lord's meadow, lift and cart the hay. Between Lammas and Michaelmas he had to find a man for whatever work the lord needed. For the great boon-works of the lord he had to appear with his whole family and for three *precariae* he had to find two men. Usually food was provided and on one day hay for his horse. When he mowed he was allowed to take bundles of hay, i.e. as much as he could lift on the handle (*manubrium*) of the scythe. The half-virgater's services differed slightly: in particular if need arose he had to drive sheep, oxen, or other animals.

The smith's virgate was held on rather different terms. He paid 2s. and had to make the iron of three ploughs. He had to plough at 'garsherth' and find a man for the four autumn boon-works.³³ With the exception of four out of the six free tenants, all had to obtain licence to marry their daughters and to sell an ox or stallion of their own breeding. They had to pay all 'gifts' and common aids, give their best beast as a heriot, and if they died intestate all their chattels were to be at the disposition of the lord. For anything sold within the manor they had to pay toll; if they brewed for sale they must give ale money or a penny for *tolsextarium*.³⁴

Some additional customs have been preserved on the early court rolls.³⁵ The abbot's tallage was regularly 20s. Fines were levied for leave to contract marriage with a widow, and for leave to give a daughter in marriage.

A series of account rolls beginning with an incomplete Pipe Roll of 1288-9 provide details of the manor's economy.³⁶ This account was audited by the prior's steward at Cottisford on 7 October 1289, and the court was held on the following day. Total receipts amounted to over £29.³⁷ By far the largest items were those resulting from the sheep flock: e.g. £19 18s. 8½d. was received for wool and skins. A fairly full corn account shows that the yield was over 34 qrs. of wheat, 70 qrs. of rye, 51½ of dredge, and 50 of oats.³⁸ Nearly all this was consumed on the manor by the *famuli* and their animals or used for seed.³⁹

An account roll of 1292⁴⁰ shows that at the end of the year the animal stock consisted of 12 horses, 14 oxen, 13 other cattle, 68 pigs, 865 sheep and lambs, and 19 'busch'. £19 16s. was received for 73 stones of wool at 5s. 6d. a qr. and £6 16s. for other wool. Small quantities of cheese and butter, 22 qrs. of wheat, 15 qrs. of dredge, and 6 bus. of lentils were sold. The bailiff was resident at the grange and the *famuli* consisted of a carter, a miller, a reaper,

who paid rent and made the iron of one plough (E.C.R. no. 144).

³⁴ *Doc. Bec Lands*, ed. Chibnall, 97-99.

³⁵ These are dated 1249, 1275, 1289, 1290: *Select Pleas in Manorial Courts*, ed. F. W. Maitland (Selden Soc. ii), 22, 23, 32, 37.

³⁶ *Doc. Bec Lands*, ed. Chibnall, 125-7. There are composite rolls for the Bec manors for 13 years between 1246 and 1320-1; separate accts. for Cottisford exist for 10 years between 1292 and 1360: E.C.R. nos. 144-51. For list see Morgan, *Bec Lands*, 6. For the Eton period there are 4 rolls: E.C.R. nos. 152-5.

³⁷ *Doc. Bec Lands*, ed. Chibnall, 125. Cf. *Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.)*, 45, where fruits, flocks, and cattle are recorded as worth £8 14s. 4d.; lands, mills, rents, and court £10.

³⁸ 'Dredge' means a mixture of various kinds of grain, especially oats and barley sown together (*O.E.D.*).

³⁹ *Doc. Bec Lands*, ed. Chibnall, 125, 137.

⁴⁰ E.C.R. no. 144.

3 shepherds, a cowman and pigkeeper, 3 plough-leaders, 3 ploughmen, a dairymaid, a woman who collected herbage for the oxen and cows and harvested in autumn, a miller's boy, a boy to watch the animals in autumn, and a boy to help the shepherd. Among the payments made were £37 to the lord, 35s. 2d. to the king for the 15th,⁴¹ and 3s. as a gift to the assessor of taxes.

In common with other Bec manors,⁴² Cottisford manor had a separate bailiff or reeve, who was resident at the grange. Extents of 1294 and 1324 complete the evidence for the economy of the manor in this period. Cottisford, it has been said, was primarily an arable manor, with very light labour services.⁴³ The arable acres in 1294, not including the fallow, amounted to 128, of which 126 were sown.⁴⁴ In 1324 the arable had increased to 150 acres, of which 80 were separate and 70 were in the common fields. The latter were worth 1d. an acre—half the value of the separate arable. Sixty more common-field acres were fallow and of no value to the lord. There were 12 acres of meadow compared with 5 in 1294.⁴⁵

In January 1325 the farm goods and stock consisted of over 22 qrs. of wheat at 5s. a qr., over 13 qrs. of rye at 3s. 4d. a qr., 60 qrs. of dredge at 2s. a qr., 10 qrs. of oats at 20d. a qr., 7 qrs. of mixed pease and vetches at 2s. a qr. There were 2 cart-horses (value 5s. each), 3 farm horses (value 4s. each), 6 oxen (value 6s. 8d. a head), 529 sheep, of which 194 were ewes and 140 two-year-old sheep (price 12d. to 1s. 2d. a head), and 21 head of poultry at 1½d. to 3d. a head.⁴⁶

The prosperity of Cottisford was at its height at the end of the 13th century. In 1292 a flock of 765 sheep was recorded,⁴⁷ a figure never approached in the 14th century. A decline set in during the reign of Edward II, when part of the manor may have been let.⁴⁸ The number of *famuli* in 1318-19 was eleven with a 'repe-reeve' and a clerk for the accounts in the autumn, but in 1319-21 there were only eight *famuli*.⁴⁹ The decreased activity on the manor in the early 14th century is particularly noticeable in the smaller numbers of sheep kept. The flock, as far as the surviving accounts record, generally varied between 400 and 500 sheep.⁵⁰ It may be noted that the death-rate among them was often high: in 1321 more than half the lambs died. For the shearing and washing of the 260 to 370 sheep an extra boy was taken on. The wool was sold to merchants, who came to Cottisford to inspect it, and it was then carried to Bledlow (Bucks.), Henley, or Ruislip (Mdx.).⁵¹

Precise details about the customary services in the early 14th century are lacking. The bailiff stated: 'of the ploughings and works . . . all the ploughings were used in cultivating the lord's land. And the works were expended in the lord's services within the court and outside it, by tallies between the reeve

and the customary tenants.' The tenants still performed some weeding and mowing services in addition to ploughing and harvest boons; in 1344-5 they were responsible for about 21 per cent. of the harvest work.⁵² In 1324 the works of 13 villeins had been worth £3 6s. 7½d. and the autumn works of 3 cottars 1s. 1½d.⁵³

There is little evidence for the topography of the fields beyond the fact that there were an East and a West Field in the early Middle Ages. Early 13th-century charters show that land was then equally divided between the two fields,⁵⁴ and the bailiff's account of 1319-20 records that the whole of one field was still being left fallow.⁵⁵ It is of interest in this connexion that in 1391, when Metteley (see below) leased the demesne, it was stated that there were '20 acres of fallow land of which 12 are being ploughed for the third time and manured with the fold'.⁵⁶ Pasture was clearly much prized and some was inclosed at an early date. In 1288, for instance, Bec's steward accused a man of trying to deprive the lord and his men of their common pasture, presumably by inclosing,⁵⁷ and it is known that the demesne had at least 86 acres of separate pasture at Cote.⁵⁸ Some, if not all, of the meadow was assigned by lot.⁵⁹

Early 14th-century tax assessments show that the community was relatively small and far from rich: 15 persons were assessed in 1306, 16 in 1316, and 15 in 1327.⁶⁰ The total tax of £2 5s. paid in 1316 was only about a third of that paid by the larger villages in the hundred, such as Chesterton and Somerton. The abbey's contribution was naturally the highest, but it is worth noting that the amount paid by its grange in 1306 was unusually high—more than three times as much again as the next highest contributor—whereas in 1316 it was less than twice as much.

The break in the series of accounts between 1343 and 1360 is in itself significant of the dislocation caused by the Black Death. The badly written roll of 1360,⁶¹ apparently the first since the disaster, begins by stating that no accounts have been kept for many years. The pardon, issued to John Hardyng in 1355, of his outlawry for non-appearance before the justices to answer a plea of the prior that he render an account of his bailiwick at Cottisford, affords an explanation, and throws light on the economic difficulties of men in responsible positions in these disastrous years.⁶²

A comparison of the accounts of 1343 and 1360 well illustrates the severity of the economic consequences. In 1343 the amount realized for the sale of corn and stock, for instance, was £11; in 1360 it was £2 18s. 2d. The number of the *famuli* had dropped from 13, including 8 ploughmen, to 4, including the bailiff and only 2 ploughmen. Instead of the permanent shepherd once employed a shepherd was paid to fold his own sheep on the lord's land. Rents of

⁴¹ This payment is not otherwise known: no tax list before 1306 has survived for Cottisford.

⁴² See Morgan, *Bec Lands*, 54-55.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 87.

⁴⁴ E 106/2/6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 8/5.

⁴⁶ E.C.R. no. 40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* no. 144.

⁴⁸ Morgan, *Bec Lands*, 100.

⁴⁹ E.C.R. nos. 146-8.

⁵⁰ e.g. *ibid.* nos. 145 (1316-17), 148 (1320-1).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* nos. 145-9 (1316-22).

⁵² Morgan, *Bec Lands*, 100.

⁵³ E 106/8/5.

⁵⁴ e.g. E.C.R. nos. 6, 8, 19.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* no. 147.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* no. 44.

⁵⁷ *Select Pleas*, ed. Maitland, 32, 37.

⁵⁸ See above, n. 36.

⁵⁹ See E.C.R. no. 8 for 'Dolmede'.

⁶⁰ E 179/161/8, 9, 10.

⁶¹ E.C.R. no. 151. There were only 27 contributors to the poll tax of 1377: E 179/161/39.

⁶² *Cal. Pat.* 1354-8, 212.

assize had dropped to less than half. A note adds that villein rents were not more because the tenements were in the lord's hand for lack of tenants. Furthermore, 9s. had been remitted so that they might pay the king's 15th. The rent of 13s. 4d. from one of the chief freehold tenements—John Bar's—was owing because 'it could not be raised'. The total receipts in 1343 had been £21 8s. 6½d. and in 1360 they were £12 15s. 9½d.

The mills and the miller appear also to have been victims of the declining economic activity. There is a reference in about 1230 to the erection of a mill and to its water-power;⁶³ one is mentioned in 1291,⁶⁴ and in 1292 the exits of the manor mill were 30s. for maslin and malt sold.⁶⁵ At this period there were both a water and a windmill. The heading *custos molend(inorum)* occurs on the 1341-2 account roll, but not on the 1360 account.⁶⁶

Another consequence of the Black Death may have been the final disappearance of the small hamlet of Cote, which seems to have been already in decline by 1343.⁶⁷ In this connexion an entry on the 1360 account roll stating that 3s. 4d. had not been paid to William de Audley (lord of Hardwick) for suit to the hundred done for the lord each year 'pro terra de Coteland' may be of significance.

Some measure of prosperity had returned to the manor by the end of the century, but judging from the tax assessments it seems that the decline noted on the manor in the early 14th century was a permanent feature and was probably true of the whole parish. Cottisford's earlier expansion could not be sustained in view of its comparatively small area. After the reassessment of 1334 its tax—in comparison with Chesterton's or Somerton's—was a good deal lower than it had been before,⁶⁸ and in 1428, as a village with fewer than 'ten inhabitants', it escaped taxation.⁶⁹ However, although the system of demesne farming had been abandoned as unprofitable,⁷⁰ the manor farm was fairly prosperous and well stocked at the end of the 14th century. Leasing had become the rule, and when it was leased in 1391 to Edward Metteley, a small country gentleman, there were 400 sheep and lambs, 3 horses, 8 oxen, 28 head of poultry, and a little boar. The crops grown were wheat, barley, maslin, peas, and oats.⁷¹ Rye and dredge, regularly grown at an earlier date, seem to have been given up.⁷²

The changes of ownership in the 15th century must have disorganized the economy of the manor. Although granted to Eton College in 1441, after having been farmed by various laymen since the dissolution of the alien priories in 1414, Eton did not immediately obtain possession. In 1454 the provost complained that the manor was unjustly detained by the Sheriff of Oxfordshire, and only obtained a decision in his favour in 1458.⁷³ Eton continued the system of leasing. The dangers attendant on this practice in

the 15th century may be illustrated by the history of 'Pygot's' freehold. It was leased by John Bar (Barres) from the college, but on the victory of Edward IV over Henry VI, relying on the king's hostility to the college, he planned to keep it permanently. When the two were reconciled Bar sold 'Pygot's', and it eventually came by way of the Samwells and Ardens to Thomas Langston of Tusmore. The last was 'aferde of hys tytle and would have gyven the college the patronage of Tusmore to have byn at a poynte with theyme'.⁷⁴ Throughout the 16th century the Arden family, members of the class of lesser gentry and lessees of the Eton manor, were the chief family in the parish.⁷⁵ John Arden held a freehold of four yardlands as well⁷⁶ and contributed five-sixths of the Cottisford tax in 1524. The village paid £13 4s. 4d. compared with Somerton's £27 1s. 1d. and Chesterton's £18 8s.⁷⁷

The field system in the absence of any pre-enclosure maps cannot be satisfactorily made out. A 1612 terrier of Eton College's estate mentions a West and a North Field; in another terrier of 1675 the college's property is said to lie in North and South Fields; in a late-17th-century glebe terrier the glebe is described as lying in two fields, of which one lay eastwards and the other westwards.⁷⁸ In a terrier of 1700 and another 18th-century terrier of uncertain date the arable land is given as lying in East and West Fields.⁷⁹ It is doubtful if there were more than two fields. Considering the position of the village it would be possible to describe the arable as lying either north and south, or east and west. There are frequent references to Cote Field in the terriers, but this was a close of 100 acres which belonged to the college. So also did Winter Field (80 a.),⁸⁰ which may perhaps be identified with the Dry Great Ground (80 a.) mentioned in 1675. At this last date closes and meadows amounted to about 172 acres. Dry Great Ground and Poole Dry Ground (30 a.) may have been arable closes.⁸¹

The open-field system as so often elsewhere led to boundary disputes. A number of 17th-century records about these have survived. The fact that Arden's freehold was 'intermingled' with his 9 yardlands leased from the college gave rise to litigation, even though in the 16th century at least the boundaries of the two holdings and of others were clearly distinguished. A college memorandum of that period states that Arden's 6 yardlands are known by 'a balk in the middle of the land', Pygot's property 'by balks in the middle of the acre', and the college property by 'a balk in the middle of the land'.⁸² Nevertheless, when Sir Anthony Cope bought 6 yardlands from the Ardens in 1606, he appears to have been sold some of Eton College's leasehold along with the Arden freehold, and protracted disputes followed, which were only ended by a Chancery decree in 1618 by which the college recovered its demesne.⁸³

⁶³ E.C.R. no. 28.

⁶⁴ *Tax. Eccl.* (Rec. Corn.), 45.

⁶⁵ E.C.R. no. 144.

⁶⁶ E.C.R. nos. 150, 151.

⁶⁷ The entries referring to Cote on earlier accts. do not occur in the 1343 acct.: *ibid.* 150.

⁶⁸ See below, p. 358.

⁶⁹ *Feud. Aids*, iv. 201.

⁷⁰ Morgan, *Bec Lands*, 113 sqq.

⁷¹ E.C.R. no. 44, which also lists in detail the farm implements.

⁷² *Ibid.* nos. 144-51 *passim*.

⁷³ E 368/227/32.

⁷⁴ E.C.R. no. 245. For the Bar family see above, p. 107. For Langston (Langeton) see below, p. 336.

⁷⁵ Eton Coll. leases. For the Arden pedigree see *Oxon. Visit.* 207.

⁷⁶ E.C.R. no. 256.

⁷⁷ E 179/161/176, 198.

⁷⁸ E.C.R. nos. 156, 164, 166.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* nos. 167, 174.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* no. 294, ff. 19-21.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* no. 164.

⁸² *Ibid.* no. 294, f. 23.

⁸³ *Ibid.* nos. 255-71.

At the beginning of the dispute Eton complained in 1606 of the encroachments of Robert Petty of Tetsworth, who held a 'very good farm' at Cottisford.⁸⁴ The provost complained that Petty and other tenants had allowed 'divers wrongs' to be done. In particular Petty had ploughed up and sown with corn 'Cuckolds Burrowe', and in order to deprive the parson of his tithes had declared that it belonged to Hethe parish, the tithes of which Petty farmed.⁸⁵ A crude contemporary map of 'Cuckolds Burrowe' shows that Cottisford and Hethe land was here intermixed, the furlongs of each parish being separated by grass balks.⁸⁶ In a terrier of 1700 the burrow was said to cover about 8 acres of heath land near Cote Field, which is known to have been in the south of the parish near the Hethe boundary.⁸⁷

Sir Anthony Cope's tenants in Hethe also caused trouble after 1606 by pasturing their sheep in Cottisford fields.⁸⁸ The Cottisford tenants retaliated by cutting down Sir Anthony's corn in Hethe and making 'a great garboile there'.⁸⁹ Cope offered to discuss the boundary question with the college,⁹⁰ but the quarrel was still going on in 1607, when a college tenant complained that Cope had put 200 sheep on Cottisford common and was seeking 'his own private gain and the undoing of your poor tenants', who were unable to pay their rent.⁹¹ Cope responded later by accusing the provost's servants of unjustly detaining his sheep at Cottisford.⁹² Sir Rowland Lytton, Sir Anthony's brother-in-law, who afterwards sold his land to him, was also involved in this dispute. It was recorded in 1606 that Lytton had ploughed up and sown with oats above 100 acres of land, formerly used as pasture by the college's tenants.⁹³ This may have been the land in the south of Cottisford parish, on the Hethe border. It is uncertain whether this land was restored to pasture, but records in the late 17th century state that closes covering about 31 acres were customarily shared with Hethe from Michaelmas to Martlemas, and there may have once been a larger area of common land here.⁹⁴

There might have been similar trouble at this time with the Fermors of Tusmore and Hardwick, who held property in Cottisford, had not the college and Thomas Fermor made a partition as early as 1576 of their pasture and heath in Cottisford.⁹⁵ In 1573 Fermor had gone to law with the college because of its refusal to divide 300 acres of arable, 10 acres of meadow, 100 acres each of pasture and heath, and 40 of moor in Hardwick and Cottisford (which they held together) so that each could have and inclose his moiety 'according to the statute'.⁹⁶ Rights of intercommoning between the two parishes are likely to have dated from early times and were no doubt

encouraged by landowners holding land in both parishes. The Ardens, for instance, had been lords of Hardwick for most of the 15th century and may also have already owned land in Cottisford.⁹⁷

The increasing interest in arable land is shown by references to the ploughing up of pasture. The college's tenant at Barsis Place was in trouble in the 1630's on this account and the matter was referred to the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁹⁸ There are references in 1700 also to 8 acres ploughed for the college on Juniper Hill, which was part of the heath, when the tenant of Sir John Holman of Ardley ploughed Sir John's 'heath piece' there.⁹⁹

In about 1690 the Eton estate in Cottisford was valued at £176 10s. a year. Of this the closes and meadows were worth £126 10s. and the arable in the common field £50. It is uncertain if all the closes were meadow, but those so named were worth £70.¹ Another 17th-century valuation gives the total value as £164, but states that the bailiff in 1648 had said that the farms were worth about £200 besides the college rent. The rents in kind in 1690 included 60 couple of fat rabbits, valued at £3, and payments of wheat and malt valued at £57 16s. The entertainment provided for the college when on progress was valued at £16.² After 1587 all leases contained a clause obliging the tenant to provide entertainment for a day and two nights for the Provost and the college officers up to the number of ten.³

There is some evidence in the 17th century for the economic value of the rabbit warren, the history of which dates back to the Middle Ages, and of the need to control a potential pest. A warrener of Hardwick was leasing the warren in 1606, when trouble arose from poachers.⁴ The rights of the villagers to protect their corn from the rabbits were carefully preserved, and the warrener was bound to see that there was no excessive increase in the number of rabbits. Further proof of the warren's importance comes from Ogilby's map, where 'Cottesford or a great Coney warren' is marked.⁵ The college had 'free game of hunting and free warren'.⁶ As bucks were a common present to the college from its tenant in the 17th century, the heath was clearly the home of large game as well as small.⁷ A terrier of the manor in 1700, when Laurence Lord, gent., was tenant and there were five under-tenants living in the parish, shows that Dove House Close and other closes covered about 88 acres and that there were 56 acres of meadow, including 31 acres shared with Hethe. It is probable from their position on the ground that all the 31 acres were meadowland, though only 10 acres were actually called meadow. The arable still consisted of 18 yardlands of dispersed strips. There were 40 sheep commons, 4 cow, and 2 horse commons to each yardland.⁸

⁸⁴ Wood, *Life*, i. 50. Cf. E.C.R. nos. 57, 59, 61, 63 for his tenancy of lands called the Warren and the Flats.

⁸⁵ E.C.R. no. 178.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* no. 289.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* no. 167: a terrier of 1700. For position of Cote Field see also *ibid.* no. 164: a terrier of 1675.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* no. 178.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* no. 179.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* no. 183.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* no. 187.

⁹² *Ibid.* nos. 232-40.

⁹³ *Ibid.* no. 176.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* no. 167. The land in dispute may, however, have been a part of the land in the north-west of the parish, later known as the 'intermixed' lands, which was shared with Hethe. See map above, facing p. 1, and below, p. 177.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* nos. 54, 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* no. 230.

⁹⁷ See below, p. 170.

⁹⁸ *Blo. Cot.* 21.

⁹⁹ E.C.R. no. 167. For the Holmans see above, p. 10.

¹ E.C.R. no. 166.

² *Ibid.* no. 165.

³ *Blo. Cot.* 17.

⁴ E.C.R. no. 250. For a Chancery case in c. 1500 about the warren, which was then rented for 10 marks p.a., see C 1/136/55.

⁵ John Ogilby, *Britannia*, 1675 (London to Bucks. section).

⁶ E.C.R. no. 164: terrier of 1675.

⁷ *Blo. Cot.* 21.

⁸ E.C.R. no. 167.

In the 18th century 54 acres of meadow and closes were let for £59 19s. 9d. The grounds 'lying open' to Hethe for six weeks were reckoned as 52½ acres and were let for £19 8s. Three grounds lying together in several amounted to 138 acres and were let for £47 16s. The warren was let for £10.⁹

During the first half of the 18th century Eton College's estate was neglected, and when Richard Eyre took the lease in 1739 he found it in a 'miserable condition'.¹⁰ An account of 1759 shows that the estate then consisted of two farms in Cottisford worth £90 and £34 a year, the warren worth £8, Mr. Eyre's own farm and 'very good house' worth £97, besides the Fringford farm and mill, which were worth £55 a year. The total gross value was £284. The average rental of the estate was £8 and the fine on entry had been set at £250, though it was stated that it should have been £270. Eyre pleaded for an abatement on account of his great expenses, which as the accountant observed 'do indeed appear to have been very considerable'.¹¹ Although Eyre had spent a great deal on building and repairs, when J. R. Greenhill, the purchaser of the lease in 1773, paid £7,300 for it at an auction, he considered that he had paid 'a very extravagant price' and at least £1,300 too much. In 1776 he wrote that he had so far not made 3 per cent. on his money.¹²

In 1776 the Eton estate consisted of three farms, the tenant's (the Revd. J. R. Greenhill), and two let for £130 and £53 respectively. The warren was let for £8 and some meadow to a butcher of Hethe for £10—a rent double its real value.¹³ When the lease of the manor was sold in 1773 it was said to consist of 240 acres of inclosed land and 800 acres of common field land, with a water-mill and a mill-house at Fringford.¹⁴ Some of this land, however, must have been at Fringford, for the college had 4¼ yardlands there.

Apart from Eton College, the only proprietors in the parish in the 18th century were the rector and the non-resident Fermor family. Together these two held rather less than half the land.¹⁵ James Fermor's property was described in about 1720 as the 'manor of Cottisford' with a manor-house, several closes, and 23 yardlands and four tenements. It was leased to William Topping at a yearly rent of £51 10s.¹⁶ He resided and farmed his property himself. Evidence for his sheep-breeding comes from entries in the parish register: in 1715 'William Topping . . . shore 600 sheep' and 460 in 1716.¹⁷ From 1725 to 1733 the family was at law with the college over fishing rights in Cottisford Great Pond.¹⁸ When the Ramsays became proprietors they continued to lease the estate.¹⁹ By 1832 a small part of it had been sold to the rector and the remainder was put on the market at the Tusmore sale of 1857.²⁰ It then consisted of 616 acres, chiefly arable, and was described as a fine stock farm, suitable for the production of turnips and barley of the first quality.

⁹ E.C.R. no. 174.

¹⁰ Ibid. no. 196.

¹¹ Ibid. no. 169. For Fringford see below, p. 130.

¹² E.C.R. no. 208.

¹³ Ibid. no. 175.

¹⁴ Ibid. no. 172.

¹⁵ O.R.O. Land tax assess. 1760-1832; Oxf. Dioc. d 552.

¹⁶ O.R.O. Reg. of Papists' estates, p. 92.

¹⁷ Par. Rec.

¹⁸ E.C.R. nos. 278-82. In 1773 the college leased it as part of its estate: *ibid.* no. 172.

Before the inclosure of the open fields in 1854 farming practice had been very conservative. In 1761 Mrs. Martha Eyre and William Fermor of Tusmore²¹ had taken unsuccessful steps to secure inclosure of the common fields and obtain an act of Parliament.²² The matter was raised again unsuccessfully in 1777 after Mrs. Eyre's death and again in 1809 by the college's tenant, the Revd. J. R. Greenhill, Rector of Fringford. On the second occasion his efforts were frustrated by the alleged unreasonable demands of the Rector of Cottisford.²³ In 1848 an act was finally obtained, but the award was not made until 1854.²⁴ The chief allottees were the Provost of Eton and his lessees Edwards Rousby and John Kendal (489 a.), Sir Henry Dryden and Harriette Eliza Ramsay (592 a.), and the rector C. S. Harrison.²⁵

When the tithe award was made in September 1855 Eton College had in hand about 30 acres of plantation and wood, and the manor-house and grounds, out of its whole estate of 865 acres. Its tenants William Mansfield at Manor farm and John Mansfield at Coneygre farm held about 370 and 137 acres respectively. Two other tenants with no houses in the parish held about 270 and 41 acres respectively. The college also had nine comparatively new cottages in the south-east corner of the parish. The cottages in the village and at Juniper Hill were owned by the Fermor trustee or by their occupiers. The chief tenant on the Fermor estate, Richard Woods, held three holdings of over 332 acres, 255 acres, and 27 acres, amounting to about 615 acres. There were two closes of about 30 acres (Home and Dove Home closes), which were exempt from tithe. The parson's glebe was about 70 acres. There were 676½ acres of arable at this time and about 82 acres of meadow and pasture including the non-tithable closes. A large part of the parish (350 a. 1 r.) was still uncultivated heathland held in common.²⁶ The tithe map marks some land as sainfoin ground, but there is no evidence about when the crop was first introduced.

In 1881 the Ordnance Survey map shows that Heath Farm had been built in the north of the parish and that there were five farms in all. In 1951 there were also five farms, including the experimental farm of Twyford Mills Ltd., the seed merchants of Banbury,²⁷ but much of their land lay outside the parish boundaries.

No constables' or overseers' books have survived, and the vestry minutes (1854-1928) and highway surveyors' books (1828-49), as might be expected in a small rural parish, are uninformative.²⁸ With some exceptions a vestry was held annually. In 1856-7, at the time of a dispute with Hethe over rates and boundaries, of which no details have survived, there were eight meetings. Until 1872, when constables ceased to be appointed, the village had two. There were 2 churchwardens, 2 overseers of the poor, and 4 allotment wardens until the last were reduced to 2 in the 1880's. In addition a guardian and two sur-

¹⁹ O.R.O. Land tax assess.

²⁰ Bodl. G.A. Oxon. b 85b (57): *Sale Cat.* 1857.

²¹ Mrs. Eyre was the widow of Richard Eyre and aunt of Eton College's tenant in 1761. See above, p. 106.

²² E.C.R. no. 197.

²³ Ibid. nos. 216-29.

²⁴ Incl. act: 11 & 12 Vict. c. 109.

²⁵ O.R.O. Incl. award.

²⁶ Bodl. Tithe award.

²⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1939).

²⁸ Par. Rec.

veyors of the roads were annually appointed, and after 1865 a way-warden. From 1893 the vestry only appointed the churchwardens. Attendance at meetings dropped from 6 or 7 men to 2 or 3 in the 1870's during the agricultural depression and thereafter remained mostly at two. On one occasion in 1922 no one attended.

The first record of the parish's concern for the poor occurs in 1754 when two cottages were built on Juniper Hill for the use of the poor. They cost £28 7s. 6d. and the money was raised by a rate charged on the landholders.²⁹ The poor rate in Cottisford, as elsewhere in the county, rose rapidly in the late 18th century. In 1776 it was £32 10s. and in 1803 nearly £78. The rate of 4s. in the £ was rather higher than the average and was unusually high for a thinly populated parish.³⁰

In the early 19th century the poor were accustomed to keep their cattle on the heath and had the right to cut furze and brushwood, but later the farmers 'usurped and sold the privilege'.³¹ Flora Thompson has described in *Lark Rise* how towards the end of the century landless labourers had to keep their families on 10s. a week, but that the community was healthy and happy.³²

Apart from an occasional groom or mason recorded in the parish registers, the inhabitants of Cottisford were nearly all farmers and agricultural labourers in the 18th and 19th centuries. There was a considerable increase in numbers since the 17th century. The nine householders recorded in the hearth tax return of 1662 and the six recorded in 1665 represent the richer inhabitants, though two of them were ultimately discharged from payment on the grounds of poverty.³³ In fact there were many more householders. The Eton estate alone had ten tenants with houses or cottages in the parish in 1675;³⁴ in addition there was the rector and the tenants of the Fermor manor. In 1676 the Compton Census recorded 46 adults in the parish. The Fermor farm-house still survives, but there is no record of its cottages until 1855, when the tithe award shows that there were then ten on the estate.³⁵ In 1738 the incumbent recorded twelve cottages, a farm-house, and a gentleman's house (i.e. Eton College's house and the present Cottisford House).³⁶ No Rectory was recorded throughout the century. There was some increase by 1768, when 18 families and 99 inhabitants were returned. The decade 1710-20 had the highest number of baptisms in the century.³⁷ There was a rapid rise in the 19th century. Numbers increased from 105 in 1801 to 187 in 1841 and to 263 in 1851.³⁸ The village then had a blacksmith and a baker.³⁹ Some of the new inhabitants were immigrants from

outside: in 1841 there were 47 of these.⁴⁰ The peak was reached in 1871 with 327 persons. Thereafter on account of the agricultural depression numbers dropped to 240 in 1881. Mechanization encouraged the decline: in 1931 there were 169 inhabitants, mostly at Juniper Hill, and only 154 in 1951.⁴¹

CHURCH. Before 1081 Hugh de Grantmesnil had given the church with the tithes and a hide of land to the abbey of St. Évroul in Normandy.⁴² In 1167 St. Évroul transferred its Cottisford property to the Norman abbey of Bec, which already held the manor, in return for an annual pension of 13s. 4d.⁴³ Although the patronage of the church is not mentioned, it was undoubtedly included in the grant, for from the early 13th century the Proctor of Bec, usually the Prior of Ogbourne, presented.⁴⁴ When the lands of the alien priories were confiscated by the king during the Hundred Years War, Ogbourne's property, including the advowson of Cottisford, passed to the Crown. The king, therefore, presented in 1370, 1374, 1375, and 1403. Henry IV granted away the manor in 1404, and thereafter the advowson followed the descent of the manor. Thus Eton College became patron in 1441, and retained the advowson until 1923, when it was transferred to the Bishop of Oxford. Since 1867 it had been held with Tusmore-with-Hardwick.

Bec never appropriated Cottisford, but from the early 13th century received a pension from the rector of 13s. 4d.,⁴⁵ which went to St. Évroul according to the arrangement of 1167.⁴⁶ This pension, which was paid to the Prior of Ogbourne,⁴⁷ was taken over by the king with the advowson, and by him granted to Eton College.⁴⁸ It was not infrequently in arrears, and is not mentioned in 1535.

Cottisford in the Middle Ages was a very poor church, worth £2 in 1254, and £2 13s. 4d. at the new valuation of 1291.⁴⁹ By 1535 it was worth £6 13s. 4d.⁵⁰

During the next 200 years the value first rose rapidly to £66 net in 1611 (as recorded by the rector), and then dropped to £48 by the beginning of the 18th century, when it was discharged from the payment of tenths.⁵¹ In 1723 it was helped by a gift of £200 from Queen Anne's Bounty and the same amount from the Dean of St. Paul's.⁵² The greatest part of the income came from the tithes, which were commuted in 1856 for £321.⁵³ It is to be noted that a few acres in Hethe and Hardwick were tithable to the Rector of Cottisford.⁵⁴

According to an imperfect terrier dated 1686, the glebe consisted of about 60 acres.⁵⁵ At about this time Bishop Fell noted—'The glebe much embezled, some akers quite lost, others lessend'.⁵⁶ The church

²⁹ Blo. Cot. 37-38.

³⁰ Poor Abstract, 404.

³¹ MS. Top. Oxon. d 171, f. 303.

³² For F. Thompson see above, p. 105.

³³ Hearth Tax Oxon. 208, 235.

³⁴ E.C.R. no. 164.

³⁵ Bodl. Tithe award.

³⁶ Oxf. Dioc. d 552.

³⁷ Ibid. d 558; Blo. Cot. 36.

³⁸ Census, 1801, 1841, 1851.

³⁹ Gardner, Dir. Oxon.

⁴⁰ Blo. Cot. 37 n. 1.

⁴¹ Census, 1871, 1881, 1931, 1951.

⁴² Orderic Vitalis, *Hist. Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. Le Prévost (Soc. de l'Hist. de France, 1845), iii. 22, 24.

⁴³ *Select Docs. of English Lands of Bec*, ed. M. Chibnall (Camden Soc. 3rd. ser. lxxiii), 17.

⁴⁴ For list of medieval presentations see MS. Top. Oxon. d 460.

⁴⁵ Rot. Welles, i. 28.

⁴⁶ Chibnall, op. cit. 17, 99.

⁴⁷ Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.), 31.

⁴⁸ Blo. Cot. 32.

⁴⁹ Lunt, *Val. Norw.* 312; *Inq. Non.* (Rec. Com.), 133. It is not included in the *Tax. Eccl.*, being worth less than 5 marks.

⁵⁰ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), ii. 161.

⁵¹ Blo. Cot. 33; Bacon, *Lib. Reg.* 792.

⁵² Blo. Cot. 33; *Papers Rel. to Q.A.B. 1703-1815*, H.C. 115 (1814-15), xii.

⁵³ Bodl. Tithe award.

⁵⁴ Blo. Cot. 33.

⁵⁵ Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 106.

⁵⁶ Oxf. Dioc. d 708, f. 139b.

registers of this period and later also contain memoranda regarding the glebe. In 1848 it consisted of 50 acres.⁵⁷

The first known documentary record of the parsonage house comes from the terrier of 1606,⁵⁸ which mentions 'an orchard, garden, little close, home-stall and meadow adjacent to the parsonage house', and states that the rector may have furze to burn at his house at Cottisford. However, the date 1618 or 1619 can be made out at the back of the present Rectory house, and the tithe barn bears the date 1651, when it was restored. The house, its outbuildings⁵⁹ and barn⁶⁰ were in a bad state in the second half of the 18th century, and though repaired⁶¹ by 1810, the rector, Samuel Cooke, complained to Eton about the house.⁶² As a result the old Rectory was pulled down in 1821 and a new house was built for about £450 (builder, Peake of Fringford) at the expense of the rector, T. W. Champneys.⁶³ He, however, continued to live at Fulmer (Bucks.).⁶⁴ Non-residence in fact did not cease until the presentation of C. S. Harrison in 1853, when he enlarged the Rectory house at the then considerable cost of £400.⁶⁵

No connexion has been found between the medieval rectors and the patrons, Ogbourne Priory and Eton College. Cottisford was no doubt too poor a living to attract Eton graduates.⁶⁶ James Arden (rector 1521-46) was probably a relative of the Arden family, the lessees of the manor. While he was rector John Arden (d. 1535), besides leaving bequests to the church, made elaborate provision for memorial services there. For a year after his death five priests were to keep his 'month's mind'; during the same year a priest was to say services for him, probably every day; and for seven years five priests were to say a yearly dirge and five masses for him.⁶⁷

Non-resident rectors did not become usual until the 18th century, but an exception was Robert Clay (1609-24), a Fellow of Merton and a pluralist,⁶⁸ from whom the living was sequestered in 1616 for non-residence.⁶⁹ None of the resident rectors is worthy of note except William Paxton, who was a shining example of devotion to his cure, since the registers are consistently kept in his handwriting throughout the 29 years (1691-1720) of his incumbency. By contrast, the visitation return of 1738,⁷⁰ made by James Smith (1727-68), discloses an unsatisfactory state of affairs. To begin with, Smith was a pluralist: 'I constantly supply my vicarage of Hurley in Berks . . . tho' my family lives at a small Hospital (at Stoke) in Bucks. of which I am Master.' Smith paid for a resident curate, John Lord by name, though apparently not related to the family at the manor-house. Lord conducted two services on Sundays, read prayers on Holy Days, and celebrated Holy Communion three times a year. But there were very few communicants and children were not sent by

their parents to be catechized, though, as Lord assured the bishop, he did his best for them. Lord also told the bishop that as the parish consisted 'of but few inhabitants and those chiefly illiterate and indigent labourers', the children's parents 'had it not in their power to instruct them themselves nor the means of procuring the instruction of a common school-master'.⁷¹

Unfortunately, John Prinsep, who succeeded Smith and who, in the return of 1768,⁷² declared that he constantly resided at the Rectory house, was already an old man and died after a year at Cottisford. He had no time to improve what he found—'lukewarmness superabundant'. Prinsep's successor, Samuel Cooke, held the living for 51 years, but he is chiefly remembered as an opponent of inclosure and as a non-resident for at least part of his incumbency. He declared that the Rectory was 'so confined as not to admit of any clergyman's residence, however desirable in the neighbourhood of so many Roman Catholics belonging to the Fermor estates'.⁷³ For a time Cottisford was served by the Rector of Hethe: in 1793 he reported that the people attended church well and that a Sunday school was supported by private subscription.⁷⁴ Later (1814) the parish was served by a curate, living at Hethe.⁷⁵ Matters did not begin to improve until the advent in 1853 of C. S. Harrison, who followed Francis Hodgson, Provost of Eton and rector from 1842 to 1852. Harrison resided constantly in his parish until his death in 1896. He restored the church and keenly supported the day school.⁷⁶ As 'Mr. Ellison' he figures in *Lark Rise*, where he is unsympathetically portrayed by Flora Thompson as an old-fashioned, if kindly, autocrat.

The church of *ST. MARY* is a small building dating from the 13th century. It was described in the early 19th century as a 'low mean structure consisting of a tower covered with slate, a nave and chancel'.⁷⁷ The 'tower' was, however, no more than a bell-cote contrived by raising the pitch of the roof at the west end of the nave. The roof was made uniform in the 19th century, and the church now consists of a chancel, an aisleless nave, and a south porch. The three-light east window of the chancel seems to be late 13th century: a recess on the north side contains a stone tomb-slab decorated with the stem of a cross. The remains of the original rood-screen steps, rough stones about 2 feet high, were formerly visible under the pulpit. The south porch has a 13th-century doorway and two mass-clocks on the west side of the porch; there is also a priest's door.

When Rawlinson visited the church in 1718, he found it very much out of repair and 'very nastily kept by reason of holes and a pigeon house at the west end of it'.⁷⁸ The only 18th-century work recorded is the pointing of the walls and relaying of the pavement of the porch in 1757,⁷⁹ but the imposts of

⁵⁷ Bodl. Tithe award.

⁵⁸ Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 106.

⁵⁹ Ibid. c 62, f. 384.

⁶⁰ Ibid. f. 412.

⁶¹ E.C.R. no. 223.

⁶² Oxf. Dioc. c 454, ff. 170-1; *ibid.* c 435, pp. 350-6; Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 62, ff. 460-1.

⁶³ Oxf. Dioc. b 38.

⁶⁴ Blo. *Cot.* 31.

⁶⁵ For Guy and Gilbert, two chaplains of Cottisford (c. 1200), see E.C.R. nos. 2, 4, 24. For Roscelinus de Andria (rector 1242/3-1277) see *ibid.* 29.

⁶⁶ Blo. *Cot.* 15-16: John Arden's will.

⁶⁸ See Foster, *Alumni*, and Wood, *Fasti*, i. 335.

⁶⁹ Bodl. MS. D.Phil. d 692 (thesis by Miss D. M. Barratt), p. 168; see also *ibid.* 57.

⁷⁰ Oxf. Dioc. d 552.

⁷¹ Ibid. c 651, ff. 9-10.

⁷² Ibid. d 558.

⁷³ E.C.R. no. 222.

⁷⁴ Oxf. Dioc. b 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid. d 574.

⁷⁶ Blo. *Cot.* 31; *Wilb. Visit.*; Oxf. Dioc. c 332, c 344.

⁷⁷ MS. Top. Oxon. d 171, f. 299.

⁷⁸ *Par. Coll.* i. 102; *Oxoniensta*, xvi. 60.

⁷⁹ Oxf. Archd. Oxon. d 13, f. 34b.

the chancel arch have crudely cut classical mouldings which suggest that the arch was reconstructed in the late 17th or 18th centuries. The parishioners re-seated the north side with open sittings in 1849 and the south side in 1854. In 1860 the rector, C. S. Harrison, reported that the fabric was in a very dilapidated condition, the roof not weatherproof, the windows unsightly, and the accommodation insufficient. Hopes of enlarging the church came to nothing, but restoration was carried out in 1861 by Charles Buckeridge at a cost of £365, largely raised by private subscription.⁸⁰ Most of the square-headed windows were gothicized,⁸¹ and the small belfry shown in Buckler's drawing of 1825 was taken down. The church was retiled with Daneshill tiles in 1933.

The font was given in 1861 by John Mansfield of Hethe. There is a carved royal coat of arms of Georgian date (1714-1801), and an oak screen, dating from the 17th century, which was given by the rector, S. M. Statham, in 1935. The 18th-century organ, from the chapel in Steane Park, was installed in about 1940 as a memorial to him. It was made by Samuel Parsons of London: it has a sliding keyboard and an elegant mahogany case of Gothic design.⁸²

There is a mutilated brass without inscription depicting a man in armour and his wife, both kneeling, and thirteen children. It bears the arms of Samwell and probably commemorates John Samwell (d. c. 1500), leaseholder of Eton's manor.⁸³ There was once a memorial inscription to Robert Petty (d. 1612), a Cottisford landowner, but it cannot now be traced.⁸⁴ There are wall monuments to the following: Richard Eyre (d. 1761) and his wife Martha Eyre (d. 1772);⁸⁵ James Edwards Rousby (d. 1848); Edwards Rousby (d. 1875); and C. S. Harrison (rector 1853-96). There is a tablet commemorating John Mansfield's charity.⁸⁶

At the Reformation the church owned a parcel-gilt chalice, two sets of vestments, two copes, and a censer.⁸⁷ In the Commonwealth period there were a silver chalice, a carpet, and two chests.⁸⁸ There are now two Elizabethan chairs from Cottisford House in the sanctuary, and an old iron chest brought in 1953 from Fringford church. The present Elizabethan chalice and paten cover (1585) are respectively inscribed 'Cotsford Church Cup' and 'Cotsford'. Another chalice and paten, purchased in Spain, were presented by the 4th Earl of Effingham of Tusmore Park.⁸⁹

The timber belfry in the apex of the roof contains two bells, dated 1710 and 1858, there were also two in the 16th century. A small late-17th-century sanctus bell is in the church.⁹⁰

The earliest register contains baptisms from 1611, marriages from 1651, and burials from 1610. Those for baptisms 1760-1811 and burials 1762-1812 contain notes on the parish.

The base and part of the shaft of an ancient cross still stand in the churchyard near the south porch.

NONCONFORMITY. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries the Arden family, lessees of the manor, were recusants.⁹¹ John Arden, his wife, and Ann Arden were fined as such in 1603, and his widow was again fined in 1605.⁹² In 1610 Margaret Ewer was fined.⁹³ In spite of the fact that Cottisford was close to the Fermor estate at Tusmore, and that the Fermors held land in Cottisford, there were few Roman Catholics. One was recorded in 1685;⁹⁴ perhaps another, Thomas Pape, 'a Papist and carpenter', in 1701;⁹⁵ and in 1738 the rector wrote a full account of a papist farmer's daughter to the bishop.⁹⁶ In the early 19th century one family was visited by a priest from Tusmore.⁹⁷

Protestant dissent has never been strong. A Methodist meeting-house was opened in 1844,⁹⁸ but there were only a few members,⁹⁹ and in 1860 the rector could write that 'the greatest unity prevails from almost the absence of dissent'.¹ In *Lark Rise* Flora Thompson² mentions a small group of Methodists, who met in a cottage in Juniper Hill in the 1880's.

SCHOOLS. In 1808 a dame school supported by subscriptions taught 12 children to read.³ It had closed by 1815 when a few children attended Hethe school.⁴ A Sunday school was established by 1819 and had 30 pupils in 1833.⁵ There was a dame school again, supported by the rector, by 1852, and by the inclosure award of 1854 a plot was set aside for a village school. The rector said that it was impossible to raise the necessary money in the neighbourhood,⁶ but with the help of Eton College a National school consisting of one large room was built in 1856 to accommodate 50 children. A two-roomed cottage adjoining it was built for the schoolmistress.⁷ There were 30 pupils in 1860⁸ and 42 in 1906.⁹ Flora Thompson has described the school in the 1880's in *Lark Rise*. It was closed in 1920, but in 1924 it was leased to the County Council and reopened as a Council school. It was reorganized as a junior school in 1929 when the senior pupils were transferred to Fringford. There were 17 pupils in 1937 and 22 in 1954.¹⁰

⁸⁰ MS. Top. Oxon. c 103, ff. 292-8; Blo. Cot. 26.

⁸¹ For the church before restoration see plate facing p. 104.

⁸² *Church Guide*.

⁸³ Blo. Cot. 6.

⁸⁴ MS. Dunkin 439/3, f. 128 n.; see above, p. 111.

⁸⁵ See above, pp. 106, 112.

⁸⁶ See below, p. 116. For arms on monuments see Bodl. G.A. Oxon. 16° 217, pp. 106a, 110-11; *ibid.* 4° 685, p. 102.

⁸⁷ *Chant. Cert.* 84.

⁸⁸ Blo. Cot. 25.

⁸⁹ Evans, *Ch. Plate*, where there is a photograph; Par. Rec.

⁹⁰ Par. Rec. Inventory; *Ch. Bells Oxon.*

⁹¹ See above, p. 110; C.R.S. xviii. 256, 260.

⁹² Salter, *Oxon. Recusants*, 16, 22.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 26; for her see also above, p. 59.

⁹⁴ Oxf. Dioc. d 708, f. 139b.

⁹⁵ Par. Reg. Baptisms, sub anno 1701.

⁹⁶ Oxf. Dioc. d 552; *ibid.* c 651, ff. 9-10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* c 327, p. 294.

⁹⁸ H.O. 129/158. The meeting-house had 50 sittings but was not a separate building.

⁹⁹ It was on the Brackley Circuit in 1851; *Wilb. Visit.*

¹ MS. Top. Oxon. c 103, f. 292.

² See above, p. 105.

³ Oxf. Dioc. d 707.

⁴ *Ibid.* c 433.

⁵ *Educ. of Poor*, 721; *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, 744.

⁶ Gardner, *Dir. Oxon.*; *Wilb. Visit.*

⁷ Blo. Cot. 39.

⁸ MS. Top. Oxon. c 103, f. 295. There is a school report for 1897-9 among the parish documents.

⁹ *Vol. Sch. Ret.*

¹⁰ Inf. Oxon. Educ. Cttee.

A HISTORY OF OXFORDSHIRE

CHARITIES. By will proved 1869 John Mansfield of Hethe left £100 in stock in trust for the poor, the yearly dividend to be distributed at Christmas to six of the oldest deserving poor of the parish.¹¹ At Christmas 1954 six old people received 9s. each.

Louisa Catherine Rousby of Cottisford House, by will proved 1917, left £100, the interest to be divided between the four oldest and most deserving in-

habitants each year at Christmas. In 1954 four recipients were given 18s. 6d. each.

Grace Margaret Harrison bequeathed £100 in 1923 for the benefit of six of the oldest and most deserving poor. Six old people received 11s. 8d. each in 1954. It is permissible for one person to share in more than one charity, and the number of recipients of the three charities in 1954 was fourteen.¹²

FINMERE

FINMERE lies in the extreme north-east corner of Oxfordshire which is enclosed between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The River Ouse, which separates Oxfordshire from Buckinghamshire, forms its northern boundary, and the line of the Roman road from Bicester to Towcester separates it from Buckinghamshire on the east.¹ There have been no recorded changes in its boundaries or its area of 1,570 acres.² Geologically, the parish lies on the Great Oolite but is nearly all covered by drift gravel;³ the soil is stiff clay, gravel, and stonebrash. The height above sea-level nowhere exceeds about 400 feet and falls to about 300 at the Ouse. Except in the south, where there are several plantations, Finmere, Grassy, Widmore, and Diggings Wood, the parish is remarkably bare of trees. It is traversed by the Buckingham-Banbury road, which was made a turnpike in 1744. The Roman road was then left as a bridle-way only.⁴ In 1813 the branch turnpike road from Bicester was formed.⁵ Two lesser roads connect Finmere and Water Stratford, over the Buckinghamshire border, crossing the Ouse by Fulwell Bridge.⁶

The parish is also crossed by two stretches of railway: one made in 1845-6, and formerly part of the London and North-Western Railway, and the other a branch of the Great Central Railway opened in 1899.⁷ The nearest stations are at Buckingham and Westbury.

The village lies almost on the Buckinghamshire border, just off the main road from Buckingham and less than half a mile from the Roman road which marks the county boundary. Its name Finmere means 'pool frequented by woodpeckers'.⁸ The chief part of the ancient and modern village lies to the north of a small brook, which was covered over in 1872.⁹ The village is unusual in being sited at some distance from its manor-house, which used to lie in the extreme north-east corner of the parish, on land sloping down to the Ouse.

Finmere was among the larger villages in the hundred in the Middle Ages,¹⁰ and in the 17th century it was among those of medium size: for the

hearth tax of 1665, besides the manor and the Rectory, there were nineteen listed houses of which ten were farm-houses, returning mostly three or two hearths.¹¹ There seems to have been a steady growth in the size of the village during most of the 18th century, with a sharp increase in the last quarter.¹² Finmere continued to expand until 1851, when the census recorded 89 houses, but by 1901 had shrunk to 65 inhabited houses. There has been much rebuilding since the Second World War: by 1951 there were 72 houses.¹³

The present village straggles up the hill from the covered brook to the church.¹⁴ Below the church, there is also a steep lane which runs down past the old schoolhouse,¹⁵ built in 1824, to the drive of the 19th-century Rectory. The Rectory, a private house by 1955, was built in 1867¹⁶ on a new site when the old one was pulled down. This last house is first described in detail in 1634, when it was a house of four bays, thatched and in good repair. Attached to it was a new barn, thatched and walled, as well as an old pease barn.¹⁷ In 1662 a violent storm destroyed ten bays of building, perhaps part of the farm buildings, of which the rector re-erected five.¹⁸ In 1665 the house was taxed on six hearths, but three years later it was partly destroyed by fire.¹⁹ The terrier of 1685 consequently notes that the rectory consisted of only three bays with barn and stable of four bays.²⁰ It had been again enlarged by 1738 when there were six bays and two stables: the terrier of 1805 adds the information that the house was built of stone and was thatched.²¹ Its beautiful garden was described by Lord Selborne. It was laid out or rather improved by 'Capability' Brown at a time when he was working on the grounds of Stowe House (Bucks.), perhaps in the 1740's.²² His grouping of trees gave 'the effect of a long perspective and considerable space . . . where there was really little'.

At the point where the street to Fulwell, with a number of cottages and houses on either side, branches off westwards from the main village street, a natural centre is formed, and here are the stump of what is known as the 'cross' tree, and the post

¹¹ Blo. Cot. 39; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1887).

¹² Inf. the Revd. C. Rayner-Smith.

¹³ O.S. Map 6", xi (1885); *ibid.* 2½", 42/63 (1951).

¹⁴ *Census*, 1881, 1951.

¹⁵ G.S. Map 1", xlv NE.

¹⁶ Blo. *Fin.* 23; 17 Geo. II, c. 43.

¹⁷ Blo. *Fin.* 23.

¹⁸ See below, p. 251.

¹⁹ W. L. Steel, *Hist. L.N.W.R.* 185; R. Bucknall, *Railway Hist.* 69. For Finmere station see below, p. 285.

²⁰ *P.N. Oxon.* (E.P.N.S.), i. 209.

²¹ Blo. *Fin.* 28.

²² See below, p. 358.

²³ *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 204.

¹² Oxf. Dioc. d 552, d 558; *ibid.* c 327, p. 49.

¹³ *Census*, 1811, 1851, 1901, 1951. Between 1945 and 1954 22 council houses were built: inf. Ploughley R.D.C.

¹⁴ O.S. Map 25", xi, 16 (1881).

¹⁵ See below, p. 124.

¹⁶ Blo. *Fin.* 81-82: W. Ashwell, the patron, paid for it. It was sold in 1937.

¹⁷ Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 129.

¹⁸ Blo. *Fin.* 80-81.

¹⁹ *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 204; Blo. *Fin.* 81.

²⁰ Blo. *Fin.* 81.

²¹ Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 40, f. 134; Oxf. Dioc. c 448, f. 63.

²² Blo. *Fin.* 62, 81; illustrations of old and new rectories *ibid.* 52, 54; Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown*, 34.