

# THE CHANTRY COLLEGE OF COTTERSTOCK

Reverend John Gifford was clerk and Rector of the Church of Cotterstock and resigned the living in 1317. He farmed the manor or rectory and eventually purchased them. In May 1313 he was attached to the service of Queen Isabella and accompanied her abroad. He gained the special favour of the queen and soon afterwards became steward of her lands beyond Trend which was a position of considerable importance. He became a wealthy man but had great affection for Cotterstock and this was why he decided to establish a considerable college here.

Between 1317 and 1333 John Gifford made four appointments to the rectory at Cotterstock the last being John Ward of Holt. John Ward and his brother Peter acknowledged their indebtedness to Gifford for the sum of eighty marks, to be levied on their lands and chattels in the county. It was at this time that Gifford began to formulate his plans for a college on a great scale and through the rector's indebtedness to him was doubtless able to prevent any opposition from that quarter. The Patent Rolls have a variety of full entries sanctioning the first inception of this project and in December 1339 the scheme received the necessary episcopal sanction. When the rectory was appropriated the Bishop of Lincoln retained a pension out of it of 40 shillings, the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln of 20 shillings, and the Archdeacon of Northampton 6 shillings 8 pennies. John Gifford died of the plague in 1349.

The college consisted of a provost, twelve chaplains who might be either secular or religious and two clerks to say daily mass in the Church. The college was sustained by the manor of Cotterstock, two mills, an acre of meadow at Pinho and a fishery on the Nene, eighty five acres of Rockingham Forest with pasture rights for the whole forest. The king also granted the provost and chaplains free warren over their forest lands and immunity from every conceivable toll and tax. John Gifford granted the provost and his twelve chaplains 21 oxen, 6 plough horses, 6 cart horses, 24 cows, 2 bulls, 500 sheep, 6 sows with 80 swine and little pigs, 40 swine of the age of two years or more and 2 boars.

The right of appointing the head of the college, from 1398 down to its dissolution, passed from the college itself to the lord of the manor of Cotterstock. In 1452 Simon Norwiche was declared heir and his grandson of the same name is credited with wrecking the college which was formally dissolved on the 4 February 1536. The document of dissolution was exhibited to the commissioners by Edmund Oliver, late provost of the college.