

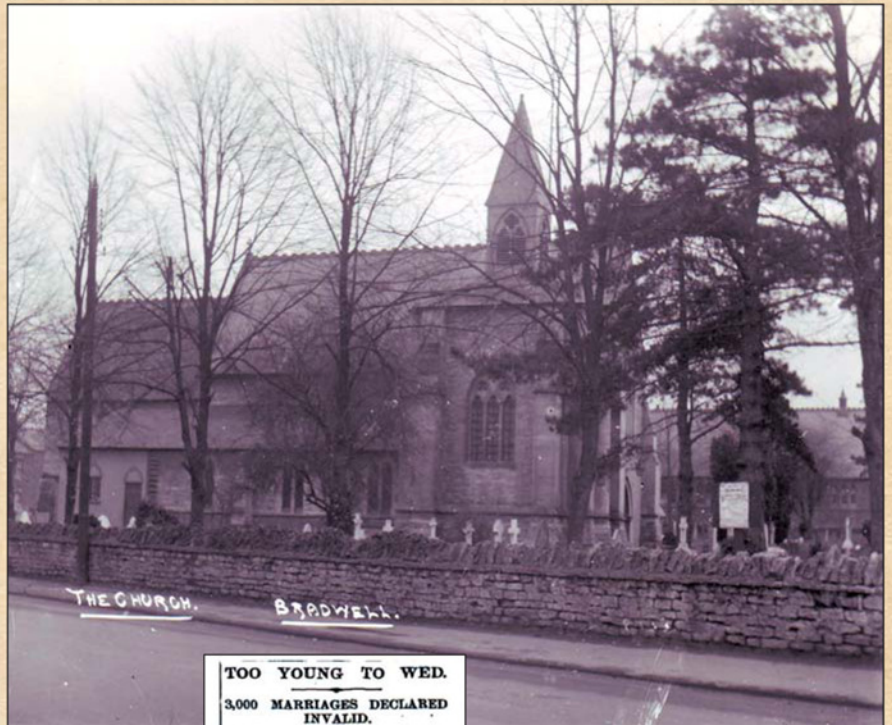
# IN THE NEWS

Looking back 100 years

## Stantonbury's Couples Are Living in Sin! 1909



The Rev Allen Newman Guest also known locally as the 'Jovial Priest.'



St James Church 1910

The Reverend Newman Guest, newly-appointed vicar of the Church of St James, Stantonbury (New Bradwell), has discovered that it has never been licensed for marriages. Built in 1850 by the London North Western Railway company, the church was assumed to have the responsibilities of the ancient parish church of Stanton Low, St Peter's.

But 434 unlicensed marriages have now taken place there. Father Guest announced from the pulpit after evening service on Sunday 10th March that 800 of his parishioners are "living in sin" and that their children are therefore illegitimate – a great shock to all parishioners!

It has taken three months for a special retrospective order to be made by the Home Secretary and passed by Parliament declaring the marriages valid – thus avoiding penalties for past ministers and church officials. The incident has not only reached national papers, but also appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The San Francisco Call*.

### TOO YOUNG TO WED. 3,000 MARRIAGES DECLARED INVALID.

NEW YORK, Saturday. A remarkable and distinctly embarrassing situation for a number of young couples has been created by a decision given yesterday in the Appellate Court, which will render about three thousand marriages illegal, providing this decision is not upset in the Higher Courts.

The ruling is based upon the marriage of minors being invalid even with the consent of the parents.—Central News.

Predicaments of the kind mentioned in the telegram have occasionally occurred in this country, usually through some oversight in regard to the licensing of the churches for the solemnization of matrimony. In the spring of last year the village of Stantonbury, Bucks, was thrown into a state of commotion by the discovery that the Church of St. James, which was consecrated in December, 1850, had never been so licensed, and that in consequence over a thousand unions which had been solemnized in it were illegal. A Bill to legalize these marriages, and to relieve the ministers who had performed the ceremony from liability to any proceedings, was promptly passed through Parliament. By a curious stroke of irony the first bridegroom to be married in the unlicensed church was a lawyer.

A similar discovery was made three years ago by an official in the Registrar-General's Office with regard to the Chapel-at-Kase at Broadwood, near Huddersfield, where the marriages in which had been illegal for the past thirty years. This matter was also speedily rectified by Parliament.

The mistake of an unlicensed church was pointed out in the little village of Colton. He was under the impression that a temporary license, granted in respect of his church in 1863, was still in force, whereas it was only granted for a particular period. Consequently all the marriages that had taken place since the expiry of the license were illegal.

The bogus clergyman has also been the cause of embarrassments of this kind. A bad case occurred in Birmingham in the early nineties, when a man who had, through some credulity, been appointed to a curacy in the city and had celebrated several marriages, was found to be an impostor and was sent to penal servitude. Similar misunderstandings have been known to occur through the pervasion of Scottish law which presumes a valid marriage in the public acknowledgment of two persons as man and wife. There was even a story of a Scottish minister who, after he had performed a mock marriage service over some of his Sunday-school teachers, and returned to his diocese that they were legally married.

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The Washington Post news article 1909

INSTRUMENT authenticating the new church of Saint James, situate at New Bradwell within the parish of Stantonbury (consecrated as Stantonbury with New Bradwell), in the county of Buckingham and in the diocese of Oxford, for the old church of Saint Peter, situate within and adjacent being the parish church of the same parish.

To all to whom these presents shall come, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England send greeting.

Whereas a new church has been built at New Bradwell, within the parish of Stantonbury, or of or belonging to the Vicar or Incumbent thereof, in the said new church as the same parish, and in the diocese of Oxford, and has been consecrated and dedicated in Saint James.

And whereas the Right Reverend Francis, Bishop of the said diocese of Oxford, the Right Honourable John Fyfe, Earl Spencer, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the Patron of the vicarage of the said parish of Stantonbury, and the Reverend Alan Newman Guest, the Vicar or Incumbent of the said vicarage of the parish of Stantonbury, have by an instrument under their hands bearing date on or about the twenty-seventh day of May, in the year one thousand nine hundred and nine, recited in the said Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England that it would be for the convenience of the said parish of Stantonbury that the said new church of Saint James, situate at New Bradwell within such parish, should be substituted for the old parish church (dedicated in Saint Peter) of the same parish.

Now, therefore, we the said Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England, in exercise and execution of the full power and authority in that behalf committed in the Act of the eighth and sixth parts of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, chapter seventh, and in the Act of the sixteenth and twentieth parts of Her said late Majesty, chapter thirty-five, and of all other powers or authorities in respect whereunto we are lawfully enabled, do by this instrument under our common seal, with the consent (expressed as aforesaid) of the said Francis, Bishop of the said diocese of Oxford, and of the said John Fyfe, Earl Spencer, and of the said Alan Newman Guest, hereby declare and give effect to the said instrument, and do hereby consent as aforesaid, shall be and the same is hereby substituted for the said parish church (dedicated in Saint Peter as aforesaid) of the same parish, and that such new church shall hereafter be the parish church of the said parish of Stantonbury, in lieu of the said old parish church of Saint Peter, as fully in all respects as if the said new church of Saint James, as hereby substituted, had been originally the parish church of the same parish, and we the said Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England, in further execution and exercise of the powers and authorities aforesaid, and with such consent as aforesaid (expressed as aforesaid) do hereby transfer, as belonging to the said old parish church (dedicated in Saint Peter as aforesaid) of the said parish of Stantonbury, or of or belonging to the Vicar or Incumbent thereof, in the said new church as aforesaid Saint James (and being by virtue of these presents the parish church of the said parish of Stantonbury) and to the Vicar or Incumbent thereof and his successors for ever.

In witness whereof to these presents we, the said Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England, have set our common seal, and the said Francis, Bishop of the said diocese of Oxford, has set his hand and affixed the official seal, and the said John Fyfe, Earl Spencer, and the said Alan Newman Guest, have signified their assent thereto, and all this the first day of July, in the year one thousand nine hundred and nine.

F. Clerk.   
 Sponsor.   
 Alan Newman Guest   
 Seal of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England 

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The London Gazette news article 1909