

Mystery of Clandestine Marriages at Norton Church January 2021

Extra Information

List of Norton le Moors clergymen to 1604 to 1759

1604 Roger Teymley

1606 John Wheelock

1611 William Barrett

1611 Thomas Mountford

1621 John Fletcher

1621 George Nicholson

1632 William Clowes

1651 Thomas Mainwaring

1661 Humphrey Repton

1697 John Repton

1733 Timothy Keene

1759 Jonathon Clowes

(from the board inside the Church)

The number of marriages at St Bartholomew's was 104 from 1744 to 1754. In only one of these marriages was there any information other than the names of the parties. (The marriage details prior to 1744 are more difficult to read.)

There were 127 marriages from 1754 to 1763. Therefore, up until 1744, this does not bear out the theory that there were Clandestine marriages in Norton Church. Unless there were population or other changes.

Examples from Fleet Registers of Marriages

The Fleet and other London registers were sometimes sparse in detail, with the minimum being the names of the parties and the date of the marriage. In other cases, they may also state the marital status, i.e. batchelor, spinster, widow and widower, their occupations and where they lived. For soldiers, their regiments are sometimes given and for sailors, the name of their ships.

Alongside the actual Official Registers, the clerks who attended the marriages sometimes kept a notebook, in which they recorded details of the marriage and sometimes other information which is not in the register. For example, the clergyman officiating and where the marriage took place. In some cases these

notebooks records are at odds with the actual Register, as in the first example below, where the dates are different.

Example 1. *14th July 1743 Fleet Register*

Gorton Sam surgeon of Leek in Staffordshire batchelor & Hannah Moss of Bow Lane spinster.

11th August 1743 Ashwell's Memorandum Book

Sam Gorton Batchelor of Leek in Staffordshire and Hannah Moss of Bow Lane Cheapside, (whose father is a cutler(?)) at Boyces at the Kings Head.

Example 2. *30th October 1753 Fleet Register*

Thomas Duxall chairmaker of Wolverhampton in Staffordshire batchelor m Jane Bennett spinster

30th October 1753 Wyatt's Register

States that this marriage took place "at home"

Example 3. *17th January 1737 Fleet Register*

John Lucas of Rigate in the county Surrey husbandman and widower m Margaret Taylor of the same widow.

17th January Barratt's Notebook 1737/1738

John Lucas of Rygate in Surrey, husbandman and widower and Margaret Taylor of the same were married Tuesday January 17th 1737 at Mr Lilleys the Bull and Garter the Fleet.

If Clandestine Marriages did take place in Norton-in-the-Moors, it could be because of its geographical isolation. In his book, History of the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent published 1843, John Ward describes St Bartholomew's Church being set on a hill and Norton-in-the-moors (at page 532) as

"comprehends an extensive territory of rude and hilly ground, measuring about 3800 acres, within which are many good dairy and mixed farms, but the greater portion is bleak and barren"

Sources looked at

Martin Docksey Essay on the History of North Staffordshire

Staffordshire Past Track

National Archives

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