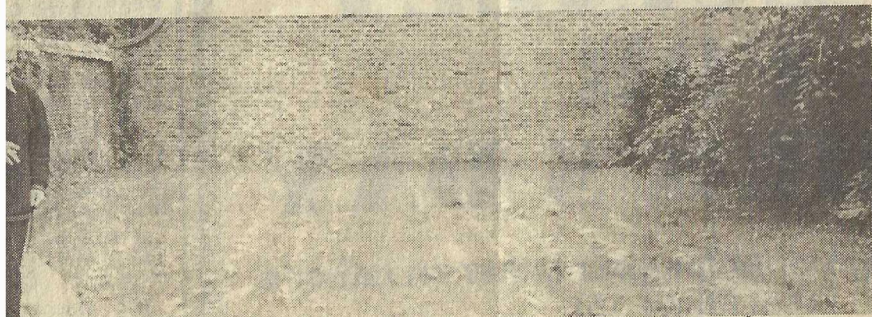


EVENING Post- **echo**

No 1289 Tuesday, June 10, 1980 9p

Law is on my side — vicar in graveyard row



The Rev Bob Stapleton in the controversial garden

By MARK MILNER

THE VICAR at the centre of a battle over whether his garden should become a cemetery said the controversy should have been buried months ago.

Villagers in Chenies, Buckinghamshire, were angered when the Rev Bob Stapleton, vicar of St Michaels, was reported to have said he would only bury relatives of the Duke of Bedford who gave the acre of land on which the rec-

tory stands... and a few trusty servants.

But, Mr Stapleton said the land was given by the Bedford estate to the Benefice of Chenies, not the village.

As the trustees wanted part of the land for their own graves, it was decided the best way round the problem was to designate all of the land as a cemetery.

But he said the legal jargon involved had "fooled some do-it-yourself lawyers" into believing there was a legal duty

to turn the rectory garden into a graveyard.

When Chenies parish council tried to get Mr Stapleton to do that, solicitors for the Church Commissioners told him the parish council could not compel him to use the land acquired in 1967 as an addition to the churchyard.

Mr Stapleton said the issue came to a head in January but had been resolved for some time with the legal opinion.

He said: "To give the trustees what they wanted the

whole area had to become a graveyard — but that is only in a technical legal sense.

"It does not mean people have to be buried there as the legal opinion confirms."

He said the present graveyard was generally accepted as being full but he said if there were an elderly resident who had a right to be buried there he would try and make it possible.

As far as he was concerned the legal document and opinion were sufficient to bury the matter once and for all.