

Wedding by special license:

A special license can be purchased from the Archbishop of Canterbury or his office in Doctor's Commons, London (located near the north end of Black Friar's Bridge.) A special license dispenses with all conditions of marriage except:

The couple must still be of age or have consent, and must be eligible to wed

A Church of England clergyman must officiate

Two witnesses must be present for the service

If neither party is in London to certify the paperwork that proves they are eligible to wed, the groom or the bride's father may ask his man of business or solicitor to do it. Or the clergyman from their parish church can send for the license. His certification is all the archbishop needs. But if the couple is not in London or Canterbury, it will take time for the license to arrive. Even in London, the archbishop's office may need time to research eligibility. Byron was furious that a week passed after he filled out the application in person before he actually received his license.

The special license was most commonly used to hold a wedding in a location outside the parish church - a London church, perhaps, or a drawing room - or to have an afternoon wedding. Its use to avoid the three-week waiting period is far more common in literature than in fact.