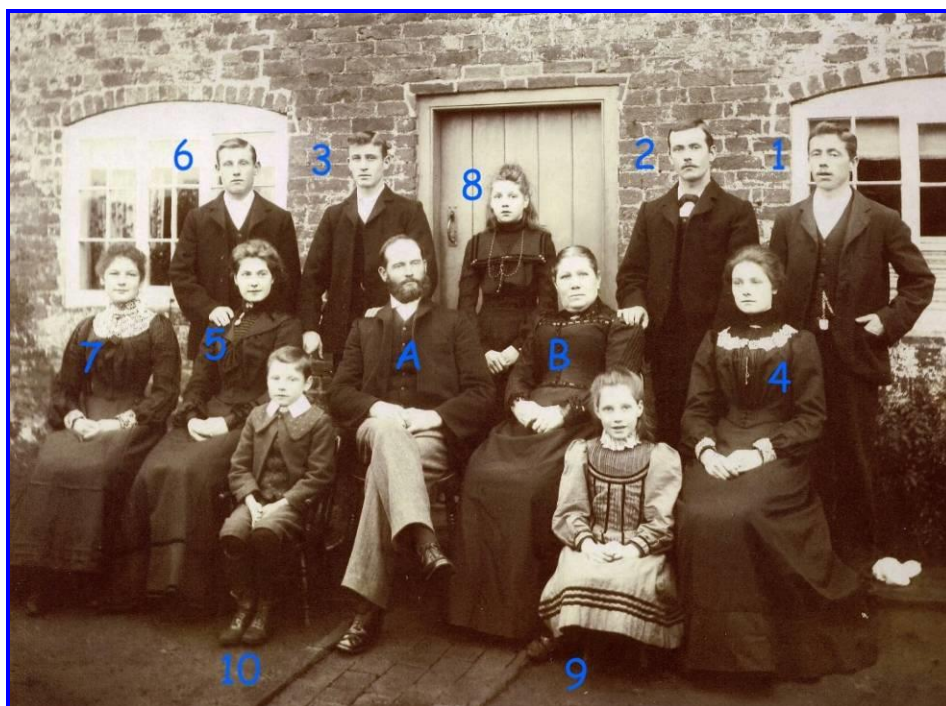


**A SOCIAL HISTORY STORY BASED AROUND
ONE OF THE STEWART FAMILY OF LOUNT
MOVING TO MARSON'S COTTAGE,
STONEY-LANE, COLEORTON**



		A	B		
		Samuel Stewart Snr	Sarah Ann Stewart		
		b.1854 m.1876 d.1932	b.1855 m.1876 d.1929		
6	3	8	2	1	
John (Jack) Stewart	William Stewart	Sarah Ann Stewart Jnr	Samuel Stewart Jnr	James Stewart	
b.1885 m. NM d.1928	b.1881 m.1903 d.1960	b.1889 m.1913 d.1964	b.1879 m.1898 d.1955	b.1878 m.1900 d.1964	
7	5	10	9	4	
Hannah Stewart	Gertrude Stewart	Frederick Robert Stewart	Clarrie Maria Stewart	Annie Elizabeth Stewart	
b.1886 m.1909 d.1968	b.1884 m.1908 d. 1968	b.1894 m.1917 d.1967	b.1891 m.1919 d.1991	b.1883 m.1903 d.1982	

**THE STEWART FAMILY OF LOUNT AT THE FRONT OF THEIR
LOUNT FARM COTTAGE IN 1901**

**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - MARCH 2022
Updated April 2024**

PREFACE

The author's male blood-line has been researched back to the late 17th century in the area of Lount and still exists today locally after some 325 years.

It was felt that the move to Marson's thatched cottage, in Stoney Lane, Coleorton, by Samuel Stewart of the Stewart family of Lount (No.2. on front cover photograph), with his wife Ada, should be recorded due to its social history interest c.120 years ago.

A comprehensive genealogy publication on the Stewarts and other related branches appear on the authors website under the sub-heading - "The Stewart, Marson, Bird and Richard Families of Coleorton, Pegg's Green and Newbold". They are free to download and read. They include the story of the author's male blood line of Stewarts from the late 17th century to the present day, and contain a history of all family members shown in the front cover photograph.

[Author's website address - samuelstewart.com](http://samuelstewart.com)

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**FROM POTTERY ROW AT LOUNT TO
"MARSON'S COTTAGE", STONEY LANE, COLEORTON**



Photograph of the thatched cottage, Stoney Lane, Coleorton - c.1950.

It was c.1902 when Samuel Stewart of the "Stewarts of Lount" family and his wife Ada (nee., Marson) came to live in Stoney Lane, Coleorton, with their four children - Samuel Marson (or young Sam as he was always known to his contemporaries), and three daughters, Annie, Clarrie and young Ada, as she was known.

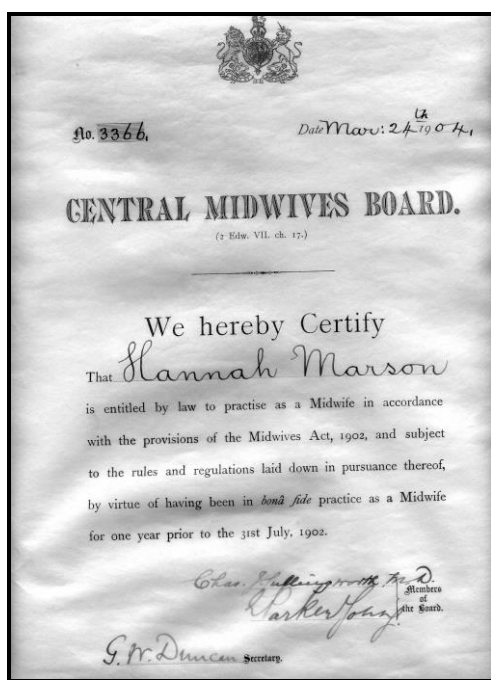
Sam and Ada were the paternal grandparents of the author, and Samuel Marson, their son, became his father. The family had previously been living in "Pottery Row" at Coleorton, which was built for the workers at Coleorton Pottery, in a two up two down terraced cottage, with their four children. This was opposite Sam's mother and father's farm cottage, where the front cover photograph was taken, which was located on the Staunton Harold Ferrer's Estate. The Ashby to Breedon road was approximately the dividing line between the Coleorton and Staunton Harold parishes which included Lount.



Pottery Row, before conversion into modern properties

Sam's mother and father, Samuel & Sarah Ann (nee., Richards), and also the author's G Grandfather & G Grandmother are marked **A** and **B** in the photograph. Sam is the handsome young gentleman marked No.2. in the photograph, standing alongside his brother James who lived with his wife Clara and daughters in the cottage at the bottom of Zion's Hill (formerly the site of Sion Baptist Chapel). Sam would have first met his wife to be, Ada, when she was appointed house maid at the Lount farm at the age of 14. She was one of the daughters of Charlie Marson (b.1816, d.1902), the Coleorton Master Nailmaker, and his second wife Hannah (b.1846 nee. Barkby). Her father was John Barkby of Thringstone, a road labourer.

It was following Charlie Marson's death in 1902, that Sam and Ada came to live with Charlie Marson's widow Hannah, the maternal G Grandmother of the author, at their thatched cottage in Stoney Lane. Charlie was 29 yrs older than Hannah (his second wife) and was registered by her as dying in the Woolrooms where he had a forge and made nails one at a time. However, there is no evidence of them actually living in the Woolrooms. As Charlie was registered as dying of Senility / Spasm of the Glottis, he had presumably wandered off to his old nail making forge and workshop and passed away there. In 1904, Hannah was officially registered as a mid-wife, and her official certificates still remain in the families possession.



It is only just recently that the author has found out what happened to Hannah. She actually remained living with Sam and Ada at the thatched cottage till 1909 when she got married to William Bird (b.1846), a widower, at Basford Register Office, Nottingham. William Bird was a coal miner Hewer. They were both 63 years of age according to the marriage certificate which puts Hannah's birth date as 1846, although her death certificate gives her as b.1844. They were living at Festus Street, Kirby-in-Ashfield when they got married, but in 1911 they were living in Huthwaite. A rather strange turn of events occurred as Hannah is registered as dying of senile decay, aged 79, at the thatched cottage in Stoney Lane on Sept 9th 1923, witnessed by daughter Ada. However, her husband William didn't die till 8th February 1924 whilst living at Queen St, Kirby-in-Ashfield. He was buried in the Huthwaite Cemetery Ground, Notts. The only conclusion the author can reach is that her husband William couldn't look after her due to her senility and Sam and Ada arranged for her to come

back and live with them. One noticeable thing on the marriage certificate is that she is shown as making her mark X. This is difficult to understand considering her previous husband Charlie Marson could write such good letters in a clearly legible hand. Also, how did she obtain a mid-wife's certificate if she couldn't sign her name ?



Hannah Marson (nee. Barkby) outside "Marson's Cottage" before 1909.

Sam Stewart worked at Coleorton Pottery for many years before becoming a coal miner, where he worked on the face as a hewer, and subsequently received a leg injury which handicapped him somewhat.

The thatched cottage was simply called "Marson's Cottage" when they moved there. The preceding 1950 photograph with Sam senior walking in front of it is valuable, in that it shows the cottage as it was prior to undergoing substantial changes by three subsequent owners from 1960. Later photographs show that the cottage was in a dilapidated state when they moved there. Sam junior immediately re-named it "Ivy Cottage", as a result of it being covered in Ivy presumably. The cottage is almost opposite the entrance road to the hamlet known as "The Woolrooms", and it still remains as the only surviving thatched cottage in Coleorton, so it is easy to locate.



**Charlie Marson & Hannah's daughter Ada with her husband Samuel Stewart
outside their beloved "Ivy Cottage"
(Paternal Grandmother and Grandfather of the author)**

Ada Stewart was the daughter of the Coleorton based nail maker Charlie Marson (b.1816) and his second wife Hannah Barkby who was born 1844 in Thringstone, Leics, although recent evidence now suggests she may have been born in Derby. Research is still ongoing into what happened to Hannah, but current research suggests she may have remarried and moved away from the area.

Charlie's mother was Sarah Marsan (given as a spinster), who was living in Macclesfield at the time he was born. Charlie married twice; his first wife was Jane Heames who was born in Coleorton in 1820. Charlie was the maternal Great Grandfather of the author, who regrets never having known him as he was an interesting character by all accounts. He once made nails on the Moor before establishing his workshop in the Woolrooms.

Sam presumably purchased "Ivy Cottage" and the large area of surrounding land, but although no concrete proof is available, it is very unlikely it was part of the Beaumont estate. Subsequently, the land was split into three plots, one to accommodate the wooden bungalow his father Sam senior and his wife Sarah Ann, with their crippled son Jack retired into from their Lount farm which had become a burden to them.

Sam and Ada's youngest daughter Ada looked after Sam and Sarah Ann and their son Jack, whilst they lived at the wooden bungalow and subsequently lived there for her lifetime with her husband Roland Hill with whom she had a son Kenneth.

A new house was built on the remaining plot of land by Sam and Ada's son Samuel Marson and his wife Agnes (see later photograph) when they got married.

The second daughter Clarrie married John Whyman and they built a new house called "Brookdale", only a stones through away in the field which his father had previously owned.

The oldest daughter Annie married Christopher Jones from Swannington and the moved to live near London where he became a policeman. They had two sons, Roy and Malcolm.

The thatched cottage is reputed to be a 17th century timber frame cottage, however, an historian has suggested it was probably originally constructed in the late 16th century, based on the timber corner posts sitting on shaped sandstone pads, which was common at that time. The pads and corner posts are still in evidence. The ground floor would have been for housing the animals in the winter and which would have given the benefit also of provided warmth for the family living above...an early form of central heating.

A workshop existed on the left hand side of the cottage, which can be seen in the earlier photograph, with Sam senior walking in front of it. This was also used by Charlie Marson for nail making, and the author found it a great place to explore when he was a lad as it was a bit like an Aladdin's Cave. Behind the workshop was a coal house and a wash house with a hand pump which drew water from a well at the rear of the property.

Sam subsequently used this workshop to establish a "bicycle repair business", from which he also sold calcium carbide, which was used in Acetylene Gas Bicycle Lamps at that time. He established the business, in order to supplement his income, after receiving an injury whilst working at the local colliery. Sam could re-spoke a cycle wheel, which was a skilled job.

On the opposite end of the cottage a shed known as the "scratching shed" was built in which fowls were kept (see pic on page 3), and in latter days, a kennel was placed there for their terrier Randy. Another deep "Well", from which their drinking water was obtained, was sunk opposite the scratching shed, in front of a large pear tree.

The brick built lavatory was at the top of the garden path well away from the cottage, in the direction Sam is walking in the earlier photograph. This contained a wooden board to sit on with a hole in it and a pan underneath. In earlier times this would have been an earth toilet where excrement was allowed to build up underneath and was then shovelled out through a hole in the back of the toilet. This would have then been put on the compost heap for digging into the garden. The weekly visit of the lavatory men and wagon to empty the pans into was a sight and smell to behold, and never forgotten, once experienced. The lorry was semi circular in shape at the back, and had sliding doors to access the tanks into which the contents of the pans were emptied. Pink disinfectant powder was then put into the pans in an attempt to keep the smell down and kill germs etc; ash from coal fires was often used as a substitute. Ashes were used to make up the paths as well.

Sam junior was the local secretary/agent for the "Independent order of Recobites", which was a mutual savings and lending schemes society, and his copper plate hand writing in his registers was impeccable. This, together with his cycle business brought numerous villagers to the cottage of course, and everyone new "our Sam".

It should be remembered that the Stewarts of Lount were staunch Methodists' and Sam Senior was a founder member of the Lount Methodist Chapel. At the time Sam, Ada and the family moved to Stoney Lane, the new Coleorton Primitive Methodist

Chapel had just been built (1901). Like the rest of the Stewart Family of Lount that moved to Coleorton, they all became stalwart attendees, and even in his old age when he could not get to worship, Sam junior was known to stand on the manicured front lawn to watch everyone pass by the cottage on their way to Chapel in order to ensure none of the regulars, including his own relatives and children, were missing. All of the descendants, including the author, followed in their Methodism roots, and not to do so, would have been greatly frowned upon.

Sam and Ada's beloved "Ivy Cottage" always seemed to be a popular place for visits, including relatives in Yorkshire and London plus many friends, members of the recobites, and people who needed their bikes repairing or to collect carbide for their bike lamps. The author recalls that it was a great event when a Mr. Pricket came to re-thatch or repair the cottage roof.

From the age of about eleven (1953), it was the author's responsibility to mow the lawns at the front of the cottage (usually on his Wednesday afternoon off from Ashby Boys Grammar School), and these had to be manicured and clipped around the edges to perfection. The reward for this was a "Threepenny Bit" from Grandma, or sometimes she managed to find a Joey or silver sixpence from her leather purse.

Sam died at his beloved cottage on July 5th 1955 aged 76 and Ada died on the 3rd of May 1960 aged 81. After Ada's death, the cottage was sadly, sold out of the Stewart family to the director of a local estate agent for the princely sum of £875.



Sam in his old age sitting in his favourite chair



Sam and Ada Stewart's grave in Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel cemetery. They are the grandfather & grandmother of the author

PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AT "IVY COTTAGE"

Although the cottage is still thatched, it is now unrecognisable from the photographs shown here and on page 3. When Sam and Ada originally moved there, the cottage was in a very dilapidated state, presumably because Charlie and Hannah Marson didn't have the money to carry out any repairs.



Photograph taken outside "Ivy Cottage" c.1925

Connie Hogg	Ada Stewart	Clarrie Stewart	Agnes Bird
Married Mr Richards	Married Roland Hill	Married John Whyman	Married Samuel Marson Stewart



Ada and friend c.1904



**Ada on the right c.1930
with Lizzie Ainge and Randy the dog**

It is interesting to compare the bottom two photographs on the preceding page, where on the RH one the roof had been re-thatched and a new porch constructed. Note also the bicycle and the bowl of water checking for a puncture in the tyre inner tube. Just to the right of the small window was an inside tiny scullery with a sink which was curtained off the tiny beamed sitting room with stuffed birds and animals in a glass cage on the side board. There was the regular black leaded fire grate with a small oven etc, which was the only means of cooking, and was used to dry the fire-lighting sticks. There was no bathroom in the cottage, and the two bedrooms were reached by winding stone steps faced with red quarry tiles. Behind the large window was the beamed parlour which was a lovely room with a grandfather clock and a beautiful American harmonium, plus displays of Victorian ornaments and green glass ware which came from Yorkshire where previous generations of the Stewarts went to work in the Glass Works and coal mines. Amazing Christmas family parties were held at the cottage, with simple games like ring on a string, Nelson' Eye, I Spy with my little eye, being played. No alcohol was served or card games played with everyone being staunch Methodists of course. As a child, even among considerably older people, in a strict environment, this was a happy time. Excellent food was enjoyed, particularly from the pigs kept by the families. Further Christmas parties were held at Sam & Agnes's and Clarrie & John's houses. Ada and Roland's wooden bungalow wasn't big enough to accommodate us.



The Stewart Family of Lount / Coleorton

Annie Stewart

Samuel Marson Stewart

Ada Stewart

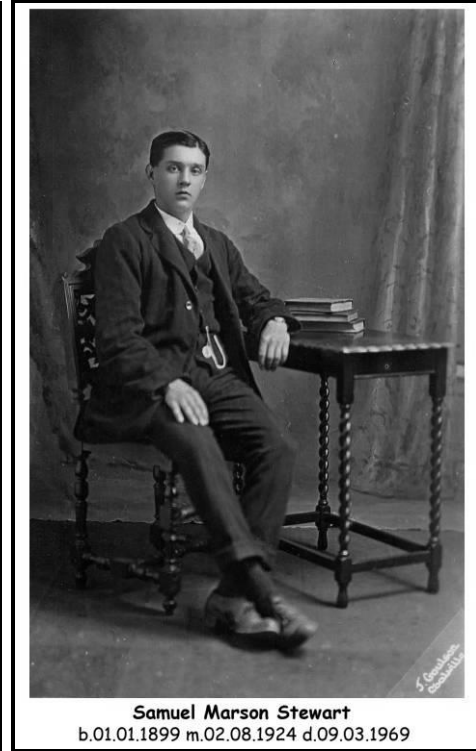
Clarrie Stewart

Ada Stewart (nee.Marson)

Samuel Stewart

Photograph taken on the front lawn of "Ivy Cottage" in Stoney Lane. c.1915.

SUPPLEMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHS



**Young Sam, Clarrie, Annie, Ada – L to R
outside “Ivy Cottage” c.1911.
Note that the girls are holding bibles
but Sam has a gun**



**Samuel with his sister Annie,
the eldest daughter on
the lawn at “Ivy Cottage**





Three Generations of Stewarts

Photo taken outside "Coleorton Methodist Chapel"
(Note mining subsidence damage)

Trevor Samuel Stewart

Samuel Marson Stewart

Ada Stewart
(nee.marson)

Samuel Stewart

**SAMUEL STEWART, HIS WIFE ANNIE & CRIPPLED SON JACK
RETIRE FROM THEIR SMALL HOLDING AT LOUNT AND
MOVE TO STONEY LANE IN 1928**

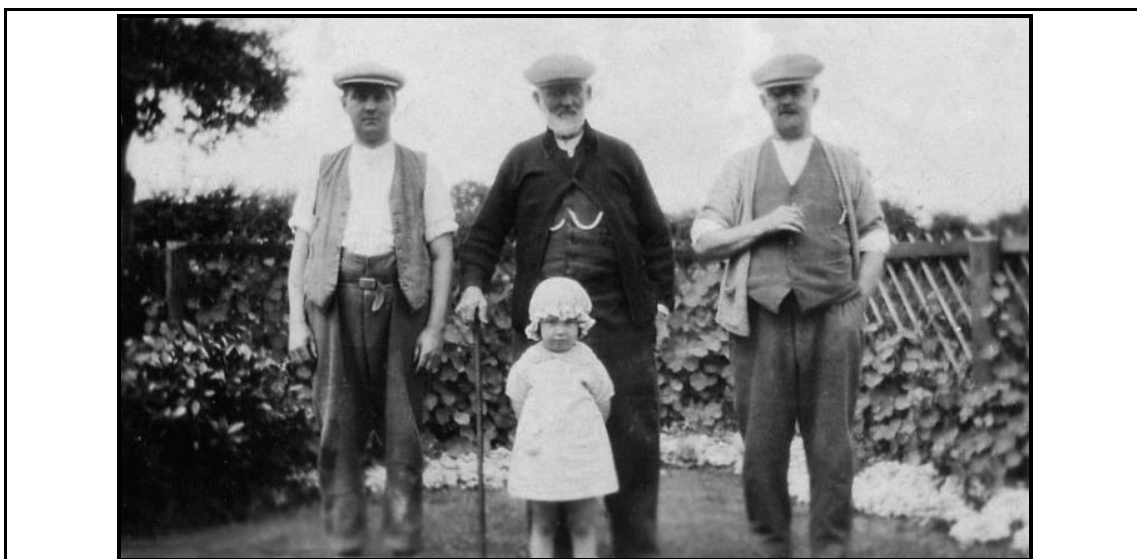
Sam and Annie (Sarah Anne, nee., Richards) relinquished the small-holding at Lount in 1928. Sam was suffering from an acute state of depression because he could not cope with the farm. One of his grand daughters Clarrie, told the author that Sam was in such a depressed state, he had taken himself off with his dog to Springwood Pool to die, and was not found for a couple of days. Their disabled son John (known as Jack) had been a big worry to them also, because he could not manage the stairs at the farm house. These stairs still exist in the cottage today. It is hard to believe that they raised their large family in this small cottage at which one end was the milking parlour and at the other end the stable for their horse. A cowshed, which is now a modern residence, was situated across the drive from the house.

Sam and Annie retired to a new two bedroom wooden bungalow in Stoney Lane, Coleorton, which was built by the family for them (see following photograph) on the land which was previously part of the thatched cottage.

Ada Stewart, who was the youngest daughter of Sam and Annie Stewart, nursed Sam (d.1932), Sarah Ann (d.1929) and their crippled son Jack until their deaths and subsequently lived in the bungalow with her husband Roland.

John (aka Jack) their crippled son, died on Oct 4th 1928, not long after moving to the bungalow with his mum and dad. Annie became very distressed at Jack's passing, and the shock caused dementia to set in with the result that she passed away in 1929, less than 12 months after Jack.

Betty Weston (nee. Stewart) Samuel Marson and Agnes's daughter, and sister of the author, recalls Sam senior walking her to Kendrick's shop and post office on Lower Moor Road, to buy sweets when she was about three years of age (c.1930). The photograph below shows Betty with Sam senior, Sam junior and her father, young Sam on the lawn at "Ivy Cottage".



Four generations of Stewarts - c.1931



Samuel Marson Stewart senior with wife Annie at the new wooden retirement bungalow in Stoney Ln, Coleorton. Young Sam (father of the author) & his wife Agnes (nee. Bird) new house, named "Cwm Rhondda" and built in 1924 is in the background.

The bungalow, as can be seen from the photograph, was quite attractive. It had a veranda with hanging baskets, which can be seen in the photograph. Inside, was a small galley scullery with a tiny pantry at the end. There was a tiny living room off this with the ubiquitous leaded grate, fire, oven and water boiler filled by a ladle from the well outside. There were two small bedrooms at the rear. There was no inside toilet and my only memory was the dry lavatory housed in a small garden type shed just down from the bungalow. How the bungalow never caught fire is a miracle to me, as when Roland and young Ada lived there they had roaring fires, with the usual hot cinders falling on the carpet. Everyone in those days had a pegged rug in front of the fire, covered in holes burnt by the cinders falling off the fire. When kennel coal in particular was being burnt, mini explosions often took place in the fire, sending out sparks and cinders.

In the distance, and to the left of the bungalow, can be seen the embankment for the line of the old "Coleorton Railway", with little in the way of bushes on there at that time. This was a great playground for children but that is another story.

The surrounding gardens of the Stewart hamlet, set with potatoes, stretched all around Ivy Cottage, the wooden bungalow and Cwm-Rhondda. These were then camped & used by the families as required as their staple food. In addition they grew all their own vegetables and kept a pig. **In other words they were self sufficient.**



Sam senior, son John (aka. Jack) and his wife Sarah Ann. Photograph taken not long before their move to Stoney Lane, Coleorton .

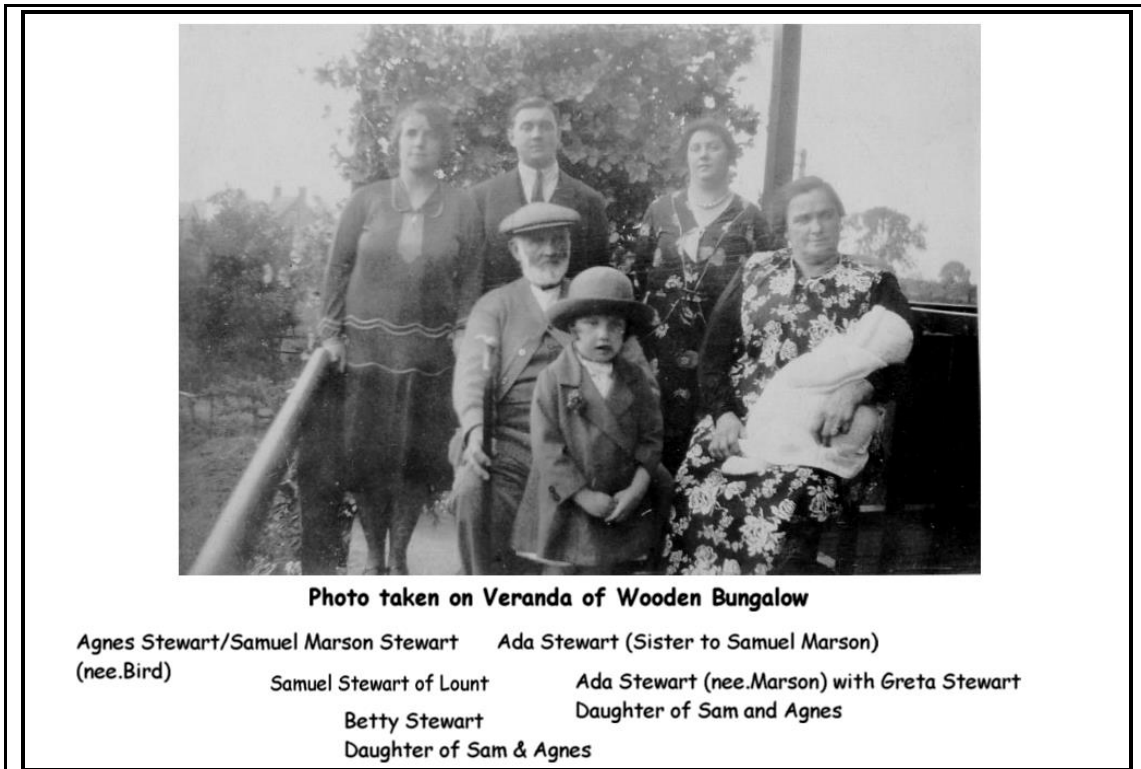


Photo taken on Veranda of Wooden Bungalow

Agnes Stewart/Samuel Marson Stewart (nee.Bird)	Samuel Stewart of Lount	Ada Stewart (Sister to Samuel Marson)
	Betty Stewart Daughter of Sam & Agnes	Ada Stewart (nee.Marson) with Greta Stewart Daughter of Sam and Agnes

Four Generations of Stewarts



Samuel Marson Stewart
b.01.01.1899 m.02.08.1924 d.09.03.1969

Samuel Marson Stewart, father of the author.

**THE MARRIAGES OF SAM AND ADA'S CHILDREN –
SAMUEL MARSON, ANNIE, CLARRIE AND YOUNG ADA**



Marriage of Roland Hill to Ada Stewart (Daughter of Samuel & Ada Stewart from "Ivy Cottage"
 A - Gwen Poiser - Daughter of Hannah Stewart (see "Stewarts of Lount" photo) & Frank Poiser
 B - Mary Saddington-Daughter of Sarah Ann Stewart (see "Stewarts of Lount" photo) & Ken Underwood
 C - Betty Stewart - Daughter of Samuel Marson & Agnes Stewart
 D - Roland Hill's Sister
 E - Samuel Stewart - Ada Stewart's Father who gave her away



**The marriage of John Whyman and
Clarrie Stewart (b.1902) taken at
the porch entrance to "Ivy Cottage"**



**The marriage of Christopher Jones from Swannington
and Annie Stewart (b.1901)**

Taken at the front of "Ivy Cottage". Her sisters Clarrie & Ada are on RH side

Below, is a wedding photograph of **Samuel Marson Stewart** (b Jan 1st 1899), who was **Sam and Ada's** first child and only son, married **Agnes Bird** (b. June 22nd 1901) on Aug 2nd 1924. They were married at "Coleorton Primitive Methodist Chapel as were their daughters Greta and Betty.

Marriage of Samuel Marson Stewart to Agnes Bird

John Whyman	Samuel Marson Stewart	Agnes Bird	Eli Bird
Married	b.01.01.1899	b. 22.06.01	Brother to
Clarrie Stewart	m. 02.08.1924	m. 02.08.1924	Agnes Bird
(Best Man)	d. 09.03.1969	d. 31.01.1983	
	Ada Stewart	Clarrie Stewart	
	Married Roland Hill	Married John Whyman	

**Photograph taken at the rear of the Bird's family home "Sandringham House",
Peggs Green, which is opposite St. George's Church, Swannington**

C 30573

The Statutory Fee for this Certificate is 2s. 7d. If required subsequently to registration, a Search Fee is payable in addition.

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF MARRIAGE.
Pursuant to the Marriage Acts, 1836 to 1898.

Registration District *Ashby de la Zouch*

1924. Marriage Solemnized at *Primitive Methodist New Chapel*,
in the District of *Ashby de la Zouch* in the Counties of *L*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name
	<i>August</i>	<i>Samuel Marson</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Father at Sanitary Pipe Works</i>	<i>Stoney Lane Coleorton</i>	<i>Samuel</i>
	<i>Second</i>	<i>Stewart</i>	<i>years</i>				<i>Stewart</i>
	<i>1924</i>	<i>Agnes Bird</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>Millress (Assistant)</i>	<i>St. George's Hill Swannington</i>	<i>John</i>

Married in the *Primitive Methodist Chapel* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Primitive Methodist*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Samuel Marson Stewart* and *Agnes Bird* in the Presence of us, *John William Whymon* and *Marrie Stewart* and in the Presence of *W* Authorised Person

I, *William Hughes*, Authorised Person under the Marriage Act, 1898, do hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of the Register Book of Marriages of the above-named Building.

WITNESS MY HAND this *2nd* day of *August*, 1924. *Will*

CAUTION.—Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this Certificate, or (2) uses it as true, knowing it to be false, is liable to Prosecution under the Forgery Act, 1913, or the Perjury Act, 1911.

[Printed by authority of the Registrar General.]

M. Cert.
A.P.

Insert in this Margin any Notes which appear in the original entry.

<i>St. Oulton</i>	
<i>Leicester + Derby</i>	
7	8
Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
<i>Marson</i>	<i>Pipe maker</i>
<i>Bird</i>	<i>Retired</i>

Methodist Certificate
William Hughes
on for *The said Chapel*
true copy of the Entry No. *26*, in

Hughes Authorised Person.

Copy of Wedding Certificate for Samuel Marson Stewart and Agnes Bird, married at Coleorton Primitive Methodist church

Samuel Marson and Agnes had a new house built in Stoney Lane, Coleorton soon after they got married. This was situated on part of the original plot of land attached to the thatched cottage. Their house was named "Cwm-Rhonnda", after the well known Hymn Tune. No doubt, this decision was influenced by Grandad Stewart.

The house was situated next to the Wooden Bungalow, built for Samuel Senior, Annie and Jack to move into as shown on page 14. The bungalow had been pebble dash rendered by this time

CHILDREN OF SAMUEL AND AGNES STEWART

- **Betty Stewart** (b. Sept 10th 1927, m. Apr 12th 1952 - married Leslie John Weston
- **Greta Stewart** (b. Aug 4th 1931, m. Aug 21st 1954) - married Peter Cooper
- **Samuel Trevor** (b. July 9th 1942, m. Sept 26th 1970) - married **Sheila Mary Bannister.**

Betty, Greta and their husbands had passed away at the time of writing

Continued over page

**MEMORIES OF A WW2 AIR RAID SHELTER
IN STONEY LANE, COLEORTON
PLUS SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**



This view of the rear of Cwm - Rhondda, Stone Lane, Coleorton taken c.1970 with the "Woolrooms" in the distance shows in the foreground the mound where the underground Air Raid Shelter was located before it was filled in some 25yrs or so previously.

The author was born in 1942 and people born during the war were generally referred

to as *War babies*. When my Mum thought she was pregnant, my Grandma (the patriarch of the family for such matters) apparently told my Mum that it was the "War Bread" that was causing the problem. I have recollections of the air raid shelter at the top of the garden which was very similar to the front cover photograph. Steps led down to the interior which was filled with water at this time. *I was probably the reason for it being filled in for safety reasons.*

My older sister Betty related the following to me when I was starting to do my research into local history:-

"When the Second World War started, I would have been thirteen years old. My dad, granddad and uncles decided to build an underground air raid shelter for the Stewart families at the top of our garden. This was a very professional construction, and included seating accommodation for everyone. When the search lights or local sirens in the area came on to warn of possible German aircraft approaching, those at home would all go down into the shelter. The nearest search light battery was at the Altons near Coalville, and there was also one on at Bardon Hill and at Whitwick. We had to put blackouts up at the windows at night so that any lights in the house could not be seen by approaching rogue aircraft. Besides heavy curtains and cardboard, a black type of sugar paper was used and even if a chink of light was showing, you could guarantee that the local policeman known as Bobbie Grant would soon be on the scene on his auto cycle. You could be fined if you didn't comply. Being situated where we were geographically, there was little likely-hood of us being bombed, and the nearest ones fell in the cemetery in London Rd, Coalville and in Whitwick pit yard. Grotesque looking "Gas Masks" were also available for us to wear. Living in the countryside, we were not really affected by the war, unlike the people that lived in the cities. We had an evacuee called Theresa come to live with us from London during the war, because of the bombing they were being subjected to there. She was extremely traumatised at having to leave her family and she returned home after a short time.

In 1939 at the outbreak of war, gas masks were issued to the public in cardboard boxes with strict instructions that they be carried at all times, without exception. Fines would be imposed if you were caught without your respirator. As such, many people replaced their cardboard boxes in time with privately available alternatives, as the government-issue cardboard boxes were prone to falling apart and were cumbersome.

Despite the government's diligent planning, gas was never used against British civilians.

Continued over page

