

**MEMORIES OF A SECOND WORLD WAR
EVACUEE - HOSTED IN COLEORTON**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2023

ARRIVAL OF 'SECOND WORLD WAR' EVACUEES AT COALVILLE

A SYNOPSIS OF A LARGER REPORT IN THE LEICESTER DAILY MERCURY DATED SEPTEMBER 1ST 1939

Carrying their gas masks and satchels, thousands of child evacuees arrived by special trains at twelve Leicestershire railway stations just prior to Germany invading Poland on September 1st 1942.

A large crowd assembled at the L.M.S. railway station at Coalville, to see the arrival of the special trains carrying evacuees from Birmingham. The Chairman, Mr. S. E. Perry, and members of the Urban Council, Dr. Andrew Hamilton (Medical Officer) and officials of the council were on the platform.

The first train brought 341 evacuees, boys and girls belonging to the Dennis Road School, Birmingham. The children were smiling as they stepped out of the train and seemed quite happy and contented.

All the traffic was stopped as they were taken across High Street to the Constitutional Club., where they received rations. They were then taken to the central field where they were grouped ready for transport to the various schools. They were taken by bus to outlying areas.

On arrival at the schools, the various headmasters took charge and the children were taken to their new homes to be received by their hosts. One of the Birmingham teachers told the Leicester Mercury 'that they had a very comfortable journey, and it rained heavily as they left Birmingham and they were glad to see the sun shining at Coalville'. 'You have given us a Royal welcome' said another teacher.

This morning, 500 secondary school children arrived at Ashby from Birmingham and were escorted to schools in the town. After a medical inspection and refreshments at the town hall, they were sent to their respective billets (hosts homes). Other batches will follow tomorrow. Mr. C. B. Dearden is the billeting officer.

Several hundred children arrived this afternoon, also from Birmingham for the rural areas. They were escorted by Mr. W. Smith to the Burton Road Council Schools, and there handed a 48 hour ration comprising biscuits, tinned milk, chocolate etc.

Mr. W. A. Brockington (Director of Education) who is touring the county said 'that local arrangements were admirable'.

More children arrive tomorrow and the total for the rural area is estimated at 1,040. The allocations to date are:-

Griffydham	140
Worthington	60
Heather	50
Newton	30

Donnithorpe	120
Oakthorpe	80
Coleorton	40
Staunton	20
Osgathorpe	25
Swannington	100
Packington	30
Measham	200
Appleby	70

Large numbers of children were evacuated from around the UK to stay with their hosts in Griffydham, Peggs Green, Osgathorpe, Coleorton and several other local villages in NW Leics as shown in the above list.

An entry in the list of the 2nd W.W. evacuees at Griffydham Senior School brought back childhood memories to the author. As a boy living with my parents at 'Cwm-Rhondda', the family home in Stoney Lane, Coleorton, I came to know a girl by the name of Joyce Talbot and her younger brother Alan, who visited the Bailey's just along the lane from my home. I didn't realise at the time that Joyce Margaret Talbot was a former 2nd W.W. evacuee from Derby, who came to live with her hosts Frank and Minnie Bailey in 1939. In fact, there is a record showing that she was admitted to Griffydham Senior School on the 25th Sept 1939 and left to return home to Derby on 12th Dec 1939. Coincidentally, the 1939 national register was taken when Joyce was living with her hosts, and gives her d.o.b. as June 4th 1931 and her later married name as Moseley. Joyce was eleven years older than me and I had always thought she and her younger brother Alan were just someone who came to visit Mr. & Mrs. Bailey from time to time.

Frankie (as he was known, b. July 6th 1876)) and Minnie (b. July 12th 1879) lived in a simple cottage on the RH side of the two semi-detached miner's cottages shown on Plot 148 of the following extract from the 1885 O/S map. The 1939 register records Frank as being a 'County Council Roadman' at the time.

According to the 1921 census, Frank was born in Worthington and Minnie in Woodville. As both their daughter Francis Lucy (b.1900) and Frank (b. 1905) were given as being born in Worthington, it is assumed they lived there at the time and moved to Coleorton sometime between 1921 and 1939. In 1921, father was an out of work 'Coal Miner Getter' at Snibston Colliery, Coalville. Both Mum and daughter's employment was recorded as home duties. Son Frank was a 16 year old apprentice fitter at Ison's and Son, Market Street, Ashby. This was where Boots, the chemist is now. They were ironmongers but sold farm machinery as well which was kept in the yard which backed onto South Street.

I came to know Joyce because in later years she used to come and visit Mr & Mrs Bailey from Derby with her younger brother Alan. I vividly remember Alan making me a fishing rod from a new garden cane with a length of cotton from an attached bobbin and a bent pin attached to the end. We used to go down to the brook which flowed out of Coleorton fishpond and ran on through the fields below the cottages before entering the circular brick tunnel under the old Coleorton Railway embankment in order to try and catch some sticklebacks. It never worked of course, and we soon learnt that it was easier to catch them in a jam jar. This invariably resulted in the brook flowing over the top of our wellies

as we looked for the fish but were oblivious of the depth of the water. However, it was exciting and passed the hours away. How simple life was for children in rural villages in those days when you made your own entertainment with no Xbox's to keep you indoors. However, that of course contrasted with city children who were being bombed, resulting in the evacuees being sent to the villages.

I always thought that the Talbots' were relatives of the Bailey's, until I discovered the record for evacuees at Griffydam school a year or so ago. I can't work out why my Mum and Dad never told me, but they didn't tell you these things when you were children did they. It wasn't considered important, and not your business.

Anyway, It is so nice to learn after all these years that Joyce took the trouble to come back and visit her hosts the Bailey's, presumably in appreciation for their kindnesses to her. Frankie Bailey and his wife Minnie were gentle folk and staunch Methodists attending Coleorton Primitive Methodist chapel. They feature in the following chapel photographs. Of course, the families in this little enclave in Stoney Lane were all staunch Methodists, including the Bailey's, the two Whyman families, the two Stewart families and the Hill family. Having said that, the great majority of people living in the lane at that time were Methodists, Coleorton having its own new Methodist chapel, and a Sunday School in the old chapel, but that's another story.

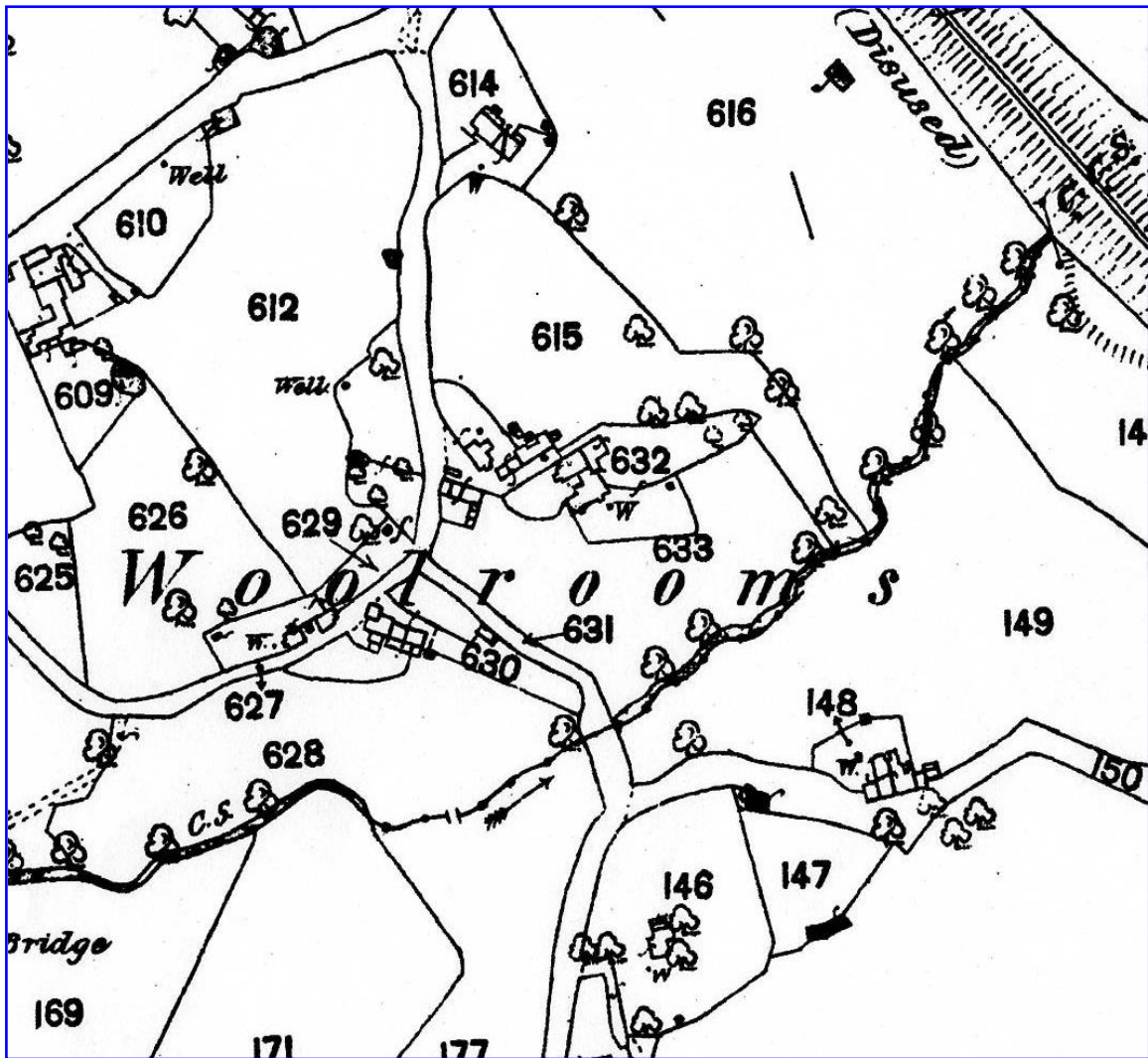
My Mum and Dad also hosted an evacuee called Theresa which I learnt in much later life from my older sister. Theresa was apparently traumatised and continually wet the bed so she had to return home. Many of these evacuee children, not surprisingly, were traumatised on being sent from their city homes to live with strangers, but you can also read tales about those who really enjoyed it, and never went back home again. This was typical of older lads who were hosted by farmers.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The adjoining cottage to the Bailey's was occupied at that time by John and Mary Whyman (d.o.b. Aug 8 1862 & July 8 1867 respectively). Their son John married my father's sister Clarrie Rose Stewart and they built and lived in the next house 'Brookdale' just around the corner. They had a son Clifford who was a talented musician who entertained people at dances around the district on the piano and later his electric organ.

Fortunately, both what I believe to be 18th century cottages are still standing today and I still have good memories of both cottages. The Bailey's tiny living room with its ubiquitous 'Black leaded oven and grate', had an upright piano, a table and a couch under the small front window and a door in the back wall which went into the scullery and pantry. There was a small wooden porch over the front door which opened onto the lane, which I have to confess we knocked on as children after dark and then ran away. How innocent was that, but still considered almost a crime by the adults.

Note the shared 'Well' (W) on the map in the rear garden from which they would have obtained their water from at that time. They also shared the locked well with the Barkby's further up the lane until they sunk their own well during the 1926 general strike. Frederick and Mary Barkby also hosted an evacuee. The gardens to the two cottages were directly across the lane. These were sold to George Robinson who built his own bungalow on them whilst at the same time working at Ellistown Colliery.





Mr Frankie & Mrs Minnie Bailey are on the LH side of the Chapel outing photograph with the author's Grandma Stewart (nee Marson) next to them. Grandad Stewart is behind the next lady Elsie Hibbert (nee brooks)



**PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN OUTSIDE
COLEORTON NEW PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL**

Top Row Left to Right :-

Freerson Mee (Conductor), John Whyman, Laban Clifford, Jack Richards, Billy Benson

Bottom Row Left to Right :-

Samuel Stewart, Charlie Wright, **Frankie Bailey**, Jim Stewart (older brother of Samuel), Herbert Rowell.