

Memories of the Grand Houses of Sedgley

by Frances Cartwright (nee Huband) and friends



Frances Huband (right), her cousin Janet Wootton nee Hodgson (centre), and Sheila Fellows (left), a friend of Frances and fellow founder of SECGA theatre company.

Frances:

I was born on 10th June 1944, just after D Day. My uncle was in the Welsh Guards and was one of those who survived the battle for Nijmegen Bridge.



Sedgley Manor House (Dr Chand's) in 1959 by Ron Baker

My bedroom in High Street Sedgley overlooked Dr Chand's house (commonly known as 'Sedgley Manor House'. In the gardens there were vineyards – it was a beautiful place. Although I'd left home by the time it was eventually knocked down, I was heartbroken. It was a victim of a 1960s redevelopment: an ugly row of shops were built in its stead along High Street and it was nothing short of vandalism.



Dormston House by Ron Baker

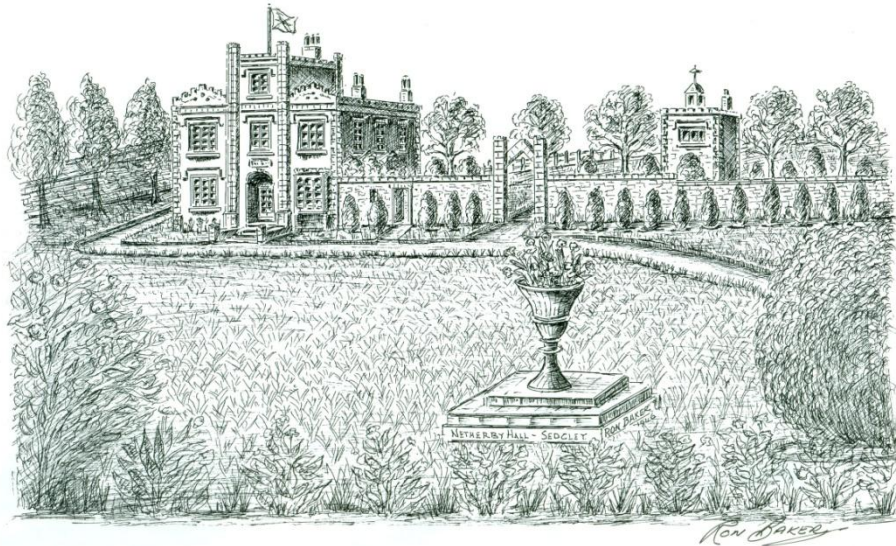
The owners of Dormston House were the Hicklings and Mrs Hickling and Councillor Hickling were friends of my parents. Mrs Hickling had a shop, the other side of Bilston Street on the corner, and as a child I used to play in her shop and look at the dresses. Mr Hickling had a snuff factory located behind the house.

They had a son called Anthony, and daughters Angela and Margaret. I always remember the organ in Dormston House. When you went through the front door the hallway really impressed you - there was a huge Chinese vase that stood there about shoulder height. The organ Mr Hickling played came up through the floor, like the ones in cinemas and town halls! The grounds of Dormston House were absolutely beautiful, but once again, they were sold off for shops.



Ellowes Hall by Ron Baker

We used to walk down to Ellowes Hall, climb over the walls and they had a wonderful orchard of apples where we used to go scrumping. They had a big barn and we used to get up into the loft and hide up there. It was owned by a Mr Howell at that time (in the 1950s). He also owned the cottage that used to be at the end of the lane in Moden Hill which is now part of the grounds of the nature reserve. When he moved to the Isle of Man he gave the cottage to the council.



Netherby Hall was demolished in the 1950s to make way for a council housing estate that was known as the 'White City' (because the properties were all painted white when they were first built). They were the first council houses to be built in Sedgley after the war.



Townsend House 1958 by Ron Baker

I can remember Townsend House although I don't remember who lived there. The grounds were later used to build Townsend Avenue council housing estate.

My mother and father used to work in the cake shop and we used to have shop assistants. 'Goodie' (Mrs Goodman) used to do our housework. There were a couple of ladies who worked in the shop in the days when you had queues down into the Bull Ring for bread and cakes. Trade fell off when the first supermarket was built in the 1960s (Fine Fare).

My mother became leader of the Mothers' Union at All Saints', taking over from Brenda Baker (nee Sherratt). Brenda used to play the piano for June Baker's dancing group where I first started dancing when I was three, in the old parish hall in Dean Street.



All Saints' Vicarage, demolished in 1969.

As a child I used to play in the vicarage. It was palatial – a typical rambling old vicarage and a wonderful place to explore as a child. It had a big old kitchen with a huge kitchen table. You went through the hallway into a lounge. The room on the other side used to fascinate me – Revd Sargeant's study lined with bookcases. The vicar's children were away at boarding school.

Our Girls' Friendly Society (a church club for girls) always seemed to be in and around the vicarage gardens or in the house in those days (the 1950s). The GFS was a wonderful training for a girl. It was run by the Diocese of Lichfield and we used to have competitions at Stafford every year. We would be involved in dancing competitions there. We'd learn things like how to set a table and write essays, and read the classics (eg Anthony Trollope) when we were quite young!