

An illustrious Parish Warden from the past: John Twigg Homer.



John Twigg Homer - photo courtesy of Staffordshire County Buildings Picture Collection

While walking along Dudley Street to the Post Office, have you ever wondered who once occupied Dormston House, the imposing mansion set well back from the road?

In 1911, the house, now converted to flats, was recorded as being the home of 45-year-old **John Twigg Homer**, listed as 'a single man', the divisional chief officer of the labour exchange.

The entry goes on to say he was born in Sedgley - and had 2 servants. However his census entry 10 years previously indicates that he had undergone a change in career - he was then a 'mine agent'.

"The Story of the Ancient Manor of Sedgley" published by E. A. Underhill in 1942 tells us more about this intriguing Sedgley resident, who appears to have been a man of great importance in the village:

"Mr. J. T. Homer, who is a member of an ancient family belonging to the parish of Sedgley, was educated at

Wolverhampton Grammar School, and although 34 years of age, he has had a remarkable and in many respects, a distinguished career.

“Before he was out of his teens [note: before 1885] he was a volunteer in connection with the British expedition to Bechuanaland under Sir C. Warren, being a member of an irregular cavalry regiment [Methuens’s Horse], and whilst in Africa, he had some stirring adventures.

“In 1887, he went to Canada, where he took up farming and led the life of a settler, in the Northwest Territory of Manitoba. After spending sometime in the goldmines of Colorado, he returned to England in 1889, and at once interested himself in local affairs.

“In 1890, he was elected a member of the Sedgley School Board, and the following year, obtained seats on the Sedgley Local Board and the Dudley Board of Guardians, being also appointed parish warden and overseer of Sedgley.

“He was elected a member of the Sedgley Urban District Council in 1894, and in 1898 he became Chairman of the Dudley Board of Guardians, to which position he was unanimously elected.

“In 1899 he was returned unopposed as representative of the Coseley portion of Sedgley Parish in the Staffs County Council, and he was appointed Chairman of the Sedgley District Council about the same time.

“He was interested in the labour movement and was a Gladstonian.”

There is a brass tablet bearing a coat of arms in memory of John Twigg Homer, the Chairman of Sedgley Urban District Council in 1899 & 1900 in All Saints', Vicar Street Sedgley.

It reads: 'In memory of John Twigg Homer, C.B.E., of Sedgley, Alderman, J.P. and D.L. for the county of Stafford, of which he was High Sheriff in 1923. Born June 24th, 1865. Died February 9th, 1934. He served generously every good cause in his native county, of whose history and traditions, he possessed an unrivalled knowledge, for which he felt an ardent love.'



Ron Baker's drawing of Homer's Temperance Chapel; and a photo of the same building (courtesy of Bob and Connie Webb).

It would appear that in 1899 there was a 'Homer's Chapel' in the Bull Ring at the junction with Gospel End Street (see illustration by Ron Baker) on the site now occupied by Barclays Bank. This was a temperance hall built at his expense on land owned by Homer, for the Temperance Society.

The above information has been obtained at the following genealogy site, on which it is possible to trace John Twigg Homer's ancestors back to the 16th century, many of whom lived in Sedgley:

http://ksimmon.sasktelwebsite.net/PS02/PS02_139.HTM

It is an excellent genealogy site and reveals a great deal about this fascinating Sedgley family.

Also worth examining are two Homer tombs by the entrance to the Church Tower at All Saints' Church, where the Homers are buried.



John Twigg Homer's tomb by door to the church tower (choir vestry).

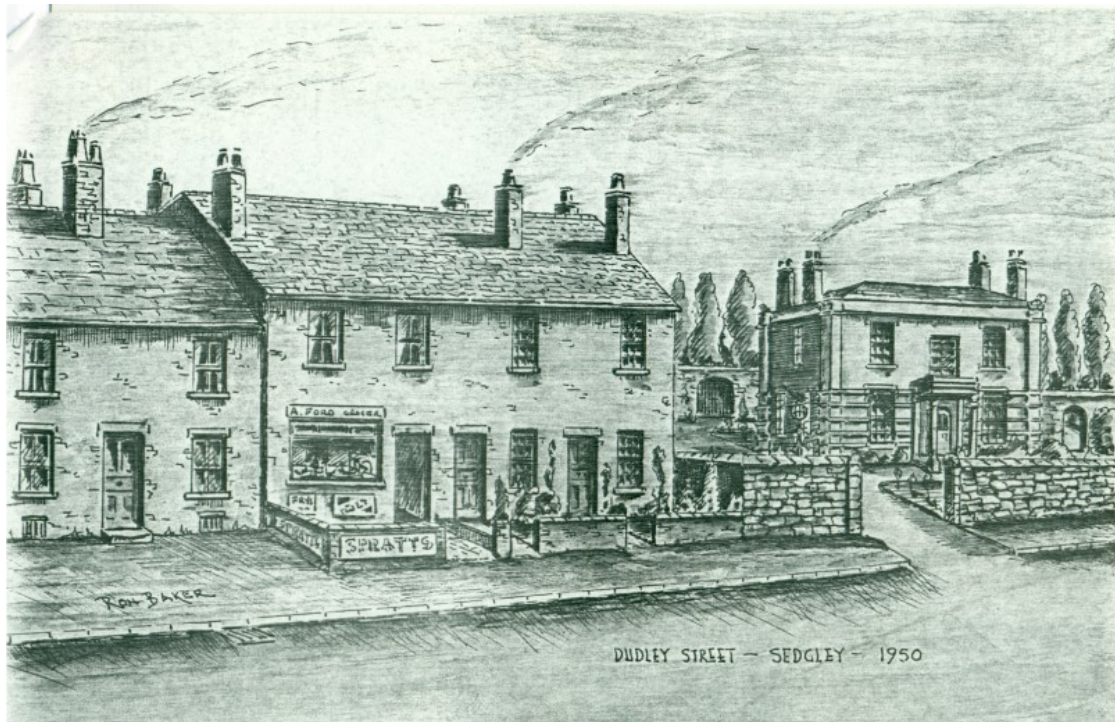
Ron Baker's drawings of Dudley Street and Dormston House



Dormston House, Dudley Street in 1969, by Ron Baker



Dormston House (far right) and Dudley Street Shops, 1987, by Ron Baker



The same aspect in 1950, by Ron Baker



Dudley Street and Dormston House in 2011, courtesy of Google Earth.



An aerial view in 2011 showing Dormston House stable block in the car park immediately behind Concorde Market (top left), Dormston House (bottom left) and Dormston Fields, now Dormston School. All were once the property of the Homers. Courtesy of Google Earth.

**If you have any more information on John Twigg Homer please email:
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Martin Jones, April 2011**