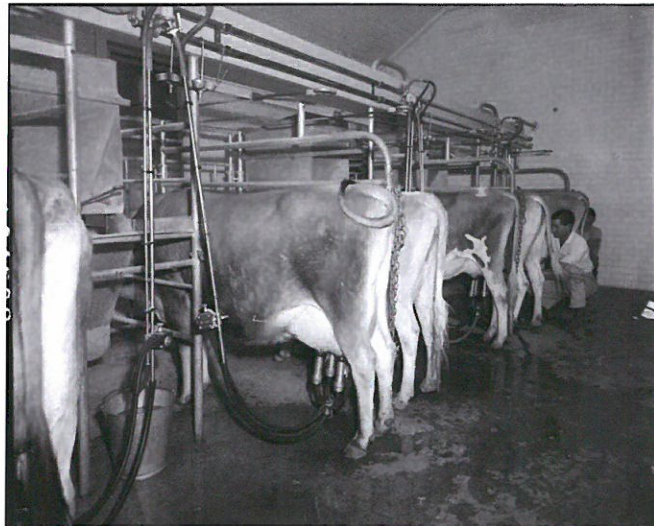


Sue Rosen & Associates



Heritage Assessment And History

*A History of Retford Park*



Prepared by Dr Sue Rosen for Mr James Fairfax AC  
September 2011

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge the generous assistance provided to me by the following people in the course of undertaking this project: Alan Butcher, Leslie Walford, Janet Finn, Kathryn Mercieca, Allen Robinson, James Fairfax who shared their knowledge of *Retford Park*; Roy Lumby and Gwylm Griffiths of the project team for their collaboration; and Max Rogers and Shylie Brown of the Berrima and District Historical Society for providing access to local research and archives.

Thank You.

*Sue Rosen*



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## 1 Exploration

Hamilton Hume claimed in 1826 that he and his brother had discovered the country later referred to as the County of Argyll when they travelled through the Bargo Brush to the area around Sutton Forest and Bong Bong in 1814. Being only 17 years old in 1814 Hume was most probably in the company of his uncle, John Kennedy, after whom Kennedy's Brush was named. In Governor Macquarie's view, Kennedy was the first white person to traverse the area. In the following years Hume became associated with most major expeditions in the area and with its general exploration.<sup>1</sup>

The 1812-1816 drought catalysed occupation of the region. The County of Cumberland was under the pressure of population growth (due to increased immigration and transportation after the close of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815) and of declining yields from exhausted soils. The effects of drought and caterpillar plagues exacerbated the pressure on land in this period, thus the expansion of settlement was recognised as a necessity and a decision regarding the utilisation of the wild cattle rather than merely protecting them and their grazing lands was imperative. In 1816 John Oxley had obtained permission from Macquarie to send stock to Wingecarribee near the site of the present town of Bowral. He moved 500 head of stock from the Bargo district, becoming the pioneer settler of the region.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1816 and 1830 exploration intensified: in 1816 Hume further explored the district; in 1817 Throsby, Hume and Wild travelled from the Cow Pastures to the west of Sutton Forest; and in 1818 James Meehan, Charles Throsby, Hamilton Hume and Joseph Wild passed through the Berrima District, splitting into two parties Throsby travelled to the coast via Kangaroo Valley while Meehan and Hume travelled to the Goulburn Plains, in the process the Bargo, Moss Vale, Bundanoon, Marulan, Meryla Pass, Kangaroo Valley and Jervis Bay Districts were traversed. In 1819 Throsby and Wild pioneered the route from Bong Bong to the Bathurst District. Joseph Wild explored the Burrigawang area in 1820.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 European Occupation

Macquarie rewarded Throsby's exploration with a grant of 1000 acres selected from within the explored area. To encourage further

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<sup>1</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee and Southern Highlands District', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. XXIII, Pt. IV, Sydney, 1937, p. 247; D.N. Jeans, *An Historical Geography of New South Wales to 1901*, Reed Education, Sydney, 1972, p. 38; J. Jervis, *A History of the Berrima District 1798 - 1973*, Library of Australian History in association with Wingecarribee Shire Council, 1986, North Sydney, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', pp. 251 - 252.

<sup>3</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', p. 247; Conservation Planning Issues: A Discussion Paper ... Throsby Park Historic Site, National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1982; D.W. Holland, *A History Of The Parish Of Robertson*, 1976, p. 23.



settlement in the area Macquarie made other grants. Throsby and five other free settlers took up lands in the Berrima District at Sutton Forest and were victualled from the Commissariat at Liverpool. Throsby was responsible for the construction of the first road from Stonequarry Creek to beyond the Cookbundoon Range which commenced with Wild as overseer. Oxley was promised 2,400 acres in the Parish of Bendooley.<sup>4</sup>

These initial grants and, more importantly, the establishment of a road into the region marked the areas opening up for settlement. The ten years from 1820 were pioneering years in the region, but settlement was slow and despite its proximity to Sydney, isolated. In 1820 Macquarie selected a site for a village to service the Sutton Forest settlers that was to be called Bong Bong. The district of Sutton Forest was also named by Macquarie at this time and wheat was under cultivation by the settlers. By 1821 James Atkinson had stock at *Oldbury*, near Berrima.<sup>5</sup> In that year James Macarthur noted of the 'new country':

I never saw a country more suitable to cattle but it is too wet for sheep. The extent is trifling, perhaps 20,000 acres. Of this Dr. Throsby occupies one half with 800 herds of horned cattle. He has established himself near the river and backed himself in to the Westward by six farms to ninety acres each, the proprietors of which all ran away with the exception of two.<sup>6</sup>

John Oxley was instructed to survey the area onwards from Bargo and through the County of Argyll as far as the Cookbundoon River in 1823. The surveyors played a crucial part in the settlement of the region. After the surveys, title could be given and land taken up with some security of tenure. Bong Bong was the first village surveyed and formed in the region, the first structure being for police use. The cart track to Bong Bong and beyond over the Cookbundoon Range had been completed in 1821. It was the intention of Governor Macquarie that Bong Bong would be developed as the capital of the County of Camden. But the Macarthurs had other ideas, and were to promote Camden as the gateway to the southern highlands. In 1822, Harper surveyed the Mittagong area, the Bong Bong area and then Sutton Forest.<sup>7</sup>

In 1829 Major Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, selected the site of Berrima whilst planning a new route south; the original road over the Mittagong Range being too steep for horse

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<sup>4</sup> Conservation Planning Issues ....; J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', pp. 252-253.

<sup>5</sup> J.Revitt, *Historic Berrima*, Anvill Press, Narara, 1979, p. 6; Conservation Planning Issues ....; R. Roxburgh, *A Brief History of Berrima*, Berrima Village Trust.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', p. 253.

<sup>7</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', p. 257; 261 - 262; J. Cavanough, et. al., 1988, p. 23; 'Camden Park Conservation Plan', History Report.



and bullock drawn traffic. Mitchell believed that the site of Berrima was superior to that of Bong Bong. At any rate, Bong Bong had an uncertain water supply. The area was still isolated and settlement scattered, rugged bushland also provided refuge for escaped convicts and those inclined toward highway robbery. The area, enroute to the south, within a reasonable distance from Sydney, however, was becoming increasingly settled.<sup>8</sup>

At this time cattle were the chief stock; being easily driven to the Sydney market. Farms were a mixture of small holdings owned by ex-convicts and large holdings owned by free settlers or ex-members of the administration. Elementary processing of primary produce commenced with the establishment, by 1827, of a post windmill for milling flour at Atkinson's property, *Oldbury*.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1850 and 1870 Berrima emerged as the main town in the region, followed in importance by Mittagong and Bowral, these latter more appropriately being called villages. There were also a number of small settlements established in the region and it was the coming of the railway and its specific route that determined those that flourished in these years and those that did not. The establishment of villages was also the result of the occupation of land by selectors after the passage of the Robertson Land Act in 1861: towns were needed to service farming districts.<sup>10</sup>

The establishment of the railway marked the beginning of the district's recognition as a tourist resort focussed on Moss Vale and Bowral. It was noted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that during 1868:

many of the gentry from Sydney coming to the township on a visit and from the salubrity of the climate here induce many to erect country residences, which has already been done by a few.<sup>11</sup>

By 1870, the population distribution and general focus of development of the area had shifted from the old road through Berrima to the towns of Bowral, Mittagong and Moss Vale which were on the railway. The resort potential of the southern highlands was recognised as Sydney residents sought relief in the area from the summer heat and the 'miasmas' associated with city living. County residences and holiday accommodation were in demand: boarding houses were built in Moss Vale and Sutton Forest from 1870-71 while country holiday homes began to be built in Bowral from the late 1870s (Bowral was to attract most tourist business from the 1880s).<sup>12</sup> The area was drawn

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<sup>8</sup> S.O. Wrightson, *Notes on Early History of Berrima Village*, Berrima Village Trust, 1968; J.Revitt, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> D.N. Jeans, op. cit., p. 103; Conservation Planning Issues....

<sup>10</sup> P. Ashton with K. Blackmore, *On The Land: A Photographic History of Farming in Australia*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1987, pp. 25- 26; 28.

<sup>11</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', pp. 277.

<sup>12</sup> J. Jervis, 'The Wingecarribee ...', p. 247; R. Ralph, *Hillview*, Berrima District Historical

into the leisure/resort industry and promoted as the 'Sanatorium of the South'.

### 3 The Riley Proprietorship, 1821 – c.1880

In 1821 two portions of land, one of 1500 acres and the other of 1530 acres, were promised by Governor Macquarie to Edward Riley, the elder.<sup>13</sup> The first parcel was a direct grant and the second parcel was granted as compensation for land surrendered by Edward in Hobart. In December 1821 Surveyor Harper, surveyed the land as a single 3030 portion, and also surveyed immediately adjacent to the north portions of 500 acres for William Christie and 300 acres for George Cutter. His field book indicates that these grants were to be named *Bloomfield*.<sup>14</sup> However, it was Riley's 3030 acre grant that took on that name, later it was occasionally referred to as *Broomfield*. [See Figure 1] In 1829, *Bloomfield* was occupied by Edward's second son, George and in c.1831 he received an additional 2560 acres to the south of *Bloomfield*, east of Walkers 1000 acres in his own right. [See Figure 2].<sup>15</sup>

It was from part of *Bloomfield* that *Retford Park* was formed in the 1880s by Samuel Hordern. It was located in the Parish of Mittagong, County of Camden.

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Society, 1986, pp 10 - 11; J. Jervis, *A History of the Berrima District*, pp. 164 -170.

<sup>13</sup> SRNSW: Primary Application Packet 5638 at 10/26540. Grant to George Robert Nichols in Trust.

<sup>14</sup> SRNSW: Surveyor General, Surveyors' Field Books, No. 185, Harper, SZ968, R. 2624

<sup>15</sup> SRNSW: Surveyor General, Letters Received from Surveyors, Larmer, 2/1594. R. 3073; Colonial Secretary, Letters Received Re: Land, 2/7958, R.1176; Supreme Court, Equity Division, No 2923 at 3/3867.









### **3.1 Edward Riley, the elder**

Edward Riley, the elder, was a merchant and pastoralist who had begun his colonial career as a merchant in Calcutta, trading between Calcutta and Canton and the Australian colonies. Edward was the younger brother of Alexander Riley who arrived in NSW as a free settler in 1804. Alexander involved himself in farming, trade and various official positions. He began raising sheep on his farm *Raby* near Liverpool. His mercantile partnership with Richard Jones saw him begin to prosper, and he was able to draw on his brother Edward's connections. Edward immigrated to New South Wales in 1816, having remarried after the death of his first wife. He had a mercurial temperament and suffered frequent bouts of depression. However, by 1817 Alexander had become disillusioned with colonial life and trading conditions and returned to England, leaving his affairs in the hands of Edward. Back in the United Kingdom, Alexander began to realise the potential value of his property, *Raby* and to develop an understanding of efficient methods of wool production. Collaborating with Edward, they imported into New South Wales a flock of Saxon Merino sheep, chartering the *Sir George Osburn* to do so; the sheep were reputedly better accommodated than many of the human passengers. They arrived in excellent condition under the supervision Edward Riley, the younger, Alexander's nephew and Edward, senior's son. But Edward Riley, the elder, committed suicide in February 1825 and the flock arrived in December of that year and were left in the inexperienced care of Edward, the younger. The sheep according to Jill Ker Conway were the foundation of the 'most important strain in the development of the Australian merino and their importance to the Australian pastoral industry is probably greater than any other single flock'.<sup>16</sup> They were grazed at *Raby* and *Cavan* on the Murrumbidgee, near Yass Plains.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> J. Ker, 'Riley, Alexander', (1778?-1833), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.2 Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.379-381; *Sydney Gazette*, 19 December 1825, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 7 August 1834.



### 3.2 George Riley

*Bloomfield* remained relatively undeveloped for some years. In the 1828 census when Edward Riley, the younger was 22 years old and his brother George was 20 they are listed as living at *Raby*, the property of their uncle, Alexander.<sup>18</sup> In the journal of William, the son of Alexander, reference was made in 1830 to the family's sheep and cattle station, near Riley's Flat but George later claimed that he was in 'sole possession'<sup>19</sup> of the property from the time he moved to it, in 1829. Riley's Flat was located on part of the study area, situated between *Retford Park* house and Old South Road.<sup>20</sup> [See Figure 5]

In 1832 an agreement between the Riley heirs was reached as to the partition of the Riley Estate but not formally enacted, in reality George continued to occupy *Broomfield*.<sup>21</sup> In February 1841 Robert Campbell and William Walker on behalf of Edward Riley, the younger (deceased), and George Riley represented by his lawyer George Robert Nichols brought a case before the Commissioners of Claims to determine ownership of *Broomfield*. It was alleged that the 1530 acres received in compensation for the Hobart land, surrendered c.1820, were the joint property of Edward Riley, the younger and George Riley. Edward Riley, the younger claimed the remaining 1500 acre portion as heir at law.<sup>22</sup> An outcome of the case, which partitioned the Riley Estate between seven heirs, was the issuing of the *Bloomfield* grant in May 1841 to George's solicitor George Nichols, and for its management in accord with instructions in the wills of both Edward Riley, the elder and the younger. Evidence before a later case for partition of the property establishes that George continued to occupy the property.

George originally built a house near the Wingecarribee River and cleared some 40 acres. This was situated further south of the study area and was on part of the portion subdivided from the estate in 1882 and indicated in Figures 5 and 6. For 20 years, up to seven tenants occupied small farms on the Riley's Flat area, clearing the land and then cultivating it.<sup>23</sup>

Advertisements over the decade indicate that in the 1830s George's stock included cattle and horses. For example, in July 1833 George Riley advertised a reward of £1 for information regarding the

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm R. Sainty and Keith A Johnson (eds.), *Census of New South Wales- November 1828*, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1985.

<sup>19</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July 1881, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> William Riley, journal entry for 1830 cited in 'The Journals of William Edward Riley, *JRAHS*, Vol.32, Pt. iv, 1946, p.222.

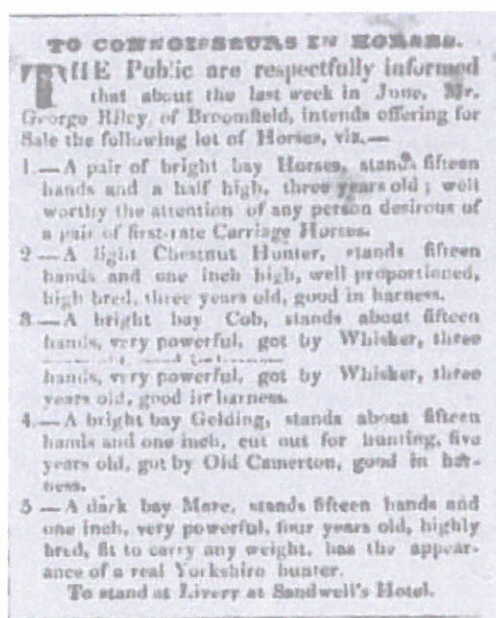
<sup>21</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 28 June 1841, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> *The Sydney Gazette*, 16 February 1841, p.4. Case No. 902.

<sup>23</sup> SRNSW: Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3867.



whereabouts of runaway contract stock keeper, James Holt, who had abandoned Riley's cattle and farm *Broomfield*, 'to the mercy of the world'.<sup>24</sup> In January 1834 Riley offered £20 reward for the return of a dusty black gelding, stolen or strayed from *Broomfield* and in 1837 a number of horses were put up for auction. In May 1838, 50 cows with calves were offered for sale from *Broomfield*. Similar sales dot the press over the following decades. In addition to his pastoral activities, in the 1830s George also ran a store at *Broomfield*, supplying an '... extensive stock of Goods ... with every description of Supplies ... Wines, Spirits, Tobacco, Groceries, &c.; an extensive assortment of Winter Clothing, worthy of the Immediate attention of Innkeepers. To whom a liberal allowance will be made.'<sup>25</sup> In the Riley mercantile tradition he accepted produce in exchange and also purchased produce for sale. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1837 George had married Phillis Hanks at Bong Bong, and by October 1847 she had given birth to their 8<sup>th</sup> child. Their partnership lasted until her death at *Broomfield* in 1867.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 3** 'For the Connoisseurs of Horses' – an advertisement placed by George Riley of Broomfield in June 1837. [*The Sydney Herald*, 19 June 1837, p.1]

<sup>24</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 15 July 1833, p.1

<sup>25</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 19 June 1837, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 15 July 1833, p.1; 9 January 1834, p.2; 19 June 1837, p.1; *The Sydney Gazette*, 5 May 1838, p.3; *The Sydney Herald*, 15 June 1837, p.4 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 September 1867, p.7; 20 October 1847, p.3.

**NOTICE**

**A**T the request of many Graziers and Settlers, Mr. George Riley has been induced to add a large variety of Articles to his Stores, and takes this opportunity of apprising those up-country Residents who will take the trouble of viewing his extensive stock of Goods, that they can meet with every description of Supplies at his Establishment at reasonable terms, the object of the Proprietor being only to remunerate himself for all road disasters attendant on the tedious trips to Sydney.

Wines, Spirits, Tobacco, Groceries, &c.; an extensive assortment of Winter Clothing, worthy of the immediate attention of Innkeepers, to whom a liberal allowance will be made.

The Proprietor, with a view of affording every accommodation, begs to intimate that Orders will be Cashed.

All kinds of Colonial Produce bought or taken in exchange. Bullocks Hides, &c.

*Broomfield, near Bushy Bay, }*  
*June 8, 1837. {*

**Figure 4** Advertisement for Riley's *Broomfield* store in June 1837. [The Sydney Herald, 15 June 1837, p.4]



Debts accumulated in the drought of 1875/76 saw both George and his son Joseph Riley become heavily mortgaged and in January 1877 Joseph was before the insolvency court with liabilities of £297 and assets of £12. His estate was surrendered.<sup>27</sup> In the extended fallout of the financial disaster, George placed a public notice, in 1880 stating that Joseph was no longer his agent or manager in any capacity whatsoever.<sup>28</sup> In 1881, disaster also hit George when a suit for the partition of *Bloomfield*, Riley vs Walker, was brought before the Supreme Court, Equity Division, which saw the breakup of the estate that he had developed over more than 50 years. This suit was a consequence of the 1832 agreement between Riley heirs and the 1840 proceedings which saw the *Bloomfield* grant in trust to Nichols referred to previously.<sup>29</sup>

In Walker v Riley, George Riley testified that he had lived on the property since 1829, but had known it since 1825 and had been given permission to occupy the land in August 1827.

I originally resided in a house built by myself near the Wingecarribee River and cleared and cultivated about 40 acres of the adjoining land ... I removed from that dwelling to this side of the estate in 1839 and to my present residence about sixteen years ago [1849].

When I first knew this estate the flat in front of my present house known as "Riley's Flats" was a swamp and quite impassible. I caused a drain to be dug which is now represented by the deep creek which runs through this land, thus draining the swamp and enabling the land to be cultivated. This flat was occupied by tenants for 5 or 7 years who cultivated the land. With few exceptions the whole of this estate consists of good land ... the north eastern part of this estate is watered by springs, there are three small wells which were used by the tenants, these wells are from 10 to 12 feet deep...<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1877, p.8; 3 April 1877,p.3; SRNSW: Primary Application 6276 at 6/10097.

<sup>28</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September 1880, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July 1881, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> SRNSW: Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3867.



**Figure 5**

This survey dated January 1882 shows the partition of Riley's *Bloomfield/Broomfield Eatate*. George Riley's original house is located in the south-west portion near the figure "A" in an area of about 40 acres which George cleared and cultivated. He lived there for about 10 years. Riley's Flats which were tenanted by small farmers for some 20 years are in the area where a racecourse and grandstand are indicated - these features are partly encompassed within the current *Retford Park* boundaries. George's second residence is not indicated, but his principle residence with a number of outbuildings is shown near the figure "3". [SRNSW: Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3867.]

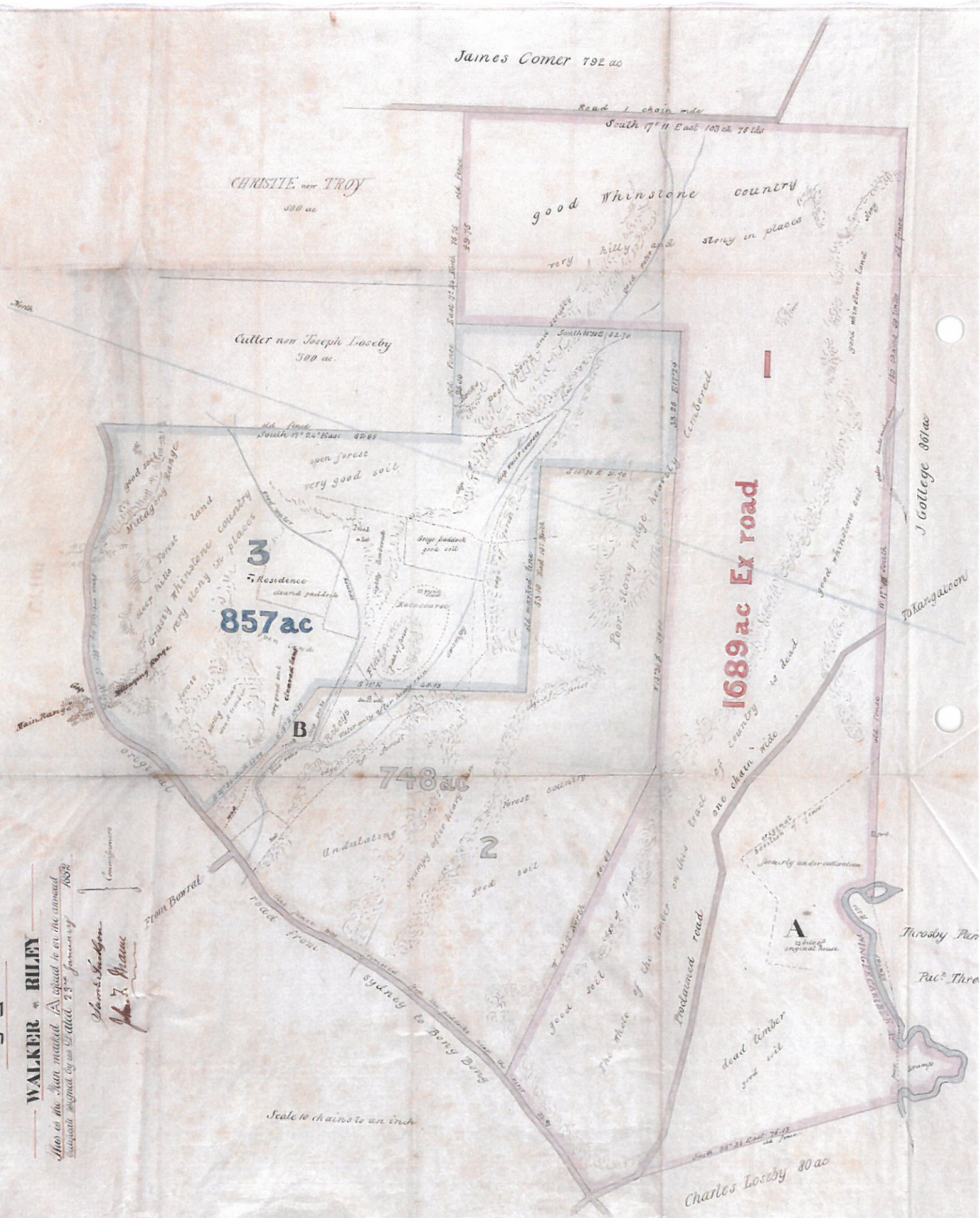
→→→→→→→→→→

**WALKER & RILEY**

Map of the Chain marked A copied to fit the standard  
original signed by us dated 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1868

Charles Walker  
H. F. Riley

Scale 10 chains to an inch



James Comer 792 ac

CHAUSTIE near TROY  
500 ac

Cutter near Joseph Losely  
500 ac

3  
857 ac

2  
748 ac

1689 ac Ex road

Charles Losely 80 ac

good Whinstone country

3

Residence

A  
original house

Throby Pen  
Pat. Thro

J College 801 ac

Mitigating ranges

Predicted road

South 18° 25' East 76 ch 24 lbs

South 17° 11' East 103 ch 78 lbs

South 17° 24' East 82 ch

South 17° 20' East 82 ch

old marked line  
53 ch 10 lbs

88 ch 8 lbs 12 oz

18 ch 6 lbs

180 ch 49 lbs 10 oz

19 ch 11 lbs 10 oz

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

old fence  
East 74° 40' North 78 ch 49 lbs

North

From Bowral

road front

Sydney to Berry Road

good soil

good soil

good soil

good soil

good soil

good soil

good soil

one chain wide

dead timber  
good soil

formerly under cultivation

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Scrubland of 1850

Throby Pen  
Pat. Thro

Throby Pen  
Pat. Thro

Throby Pen  
Pat. Thro

Throby Pen  
Pat. Thro



To settle the partition dispute George wrote to John Campbell, who was party to the case, offering the following proposal:

Now I will give you up possession of 1500 acres granted to my father also 765 acres half of the 1530 acres provided you will give me my 765 acres and the surplus viz 353 acres which is not mentioned in the grant, to me (give me this surplus land which I hold) if this proposition meets your approbation all law will be at an end or else I fear the lawyers will have the estate – I am quite indifferent which way it terminates – my wife has been dead now ten years. My boys have got homes except two of them, my two daughters that have been living with me ever since the death are about to be married to men I cannot have any intercourse with, therefore they have left me to follow out their own wishes. I merely state the above lest you might be led to believe I am leading a reckless life, I am as I have all along been a miserable man.<sup>31</sup>

George had cleared, fenced and cultivated the land since his occupation in 1829 and expended some £3,000. At least £2,000 was spent on the construction of his residence with offices and outbuildings and their ongoing maintenance.<sup>32</sup>

It was ordered that the 'Commission of Partition' should divide the entire property in the same proportion as the 3030 were to be divided and that the portion allowed George Riley should surround the house he had built. That division of the 3030 acre property had been: 1500 to the trustees of the will of Edward Riley; 765 acres to the trustees of the will of Edward Riley, the younger; and the other 765 acres to George Riley.<sup>33</sup> George was also to be compensated for any lasting improvements he had made to the other portions of the property. The share allocated to the trustees of Edward Riley senior was to be sold and costs were to be reserved.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> SRNSW: Affidavit of George Riley in Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3868.

<sup>32</sup> SRNSW: Affidavit of George Riley in Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3868.

<sup>33</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July 1881, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July 1881, p.8.

The following year the property began to be sold off by the Riley family. In October 1882, an advertisement was placed in *The Sydney Morning Herald* notifying the auction of 857 acres of 'magnificent property, comprising the homestead portion of the celebrated *Bloomfield Estate*, consisting of the richest and most elevated part, with springs of pure water', on instructions from Joseph Riley.<sup>35</sup> This was the portion allocated to George. It remained on the market intermittently advertised across the next year. In November 1883 the Sheriff's Office announced that the property would be sold on the verandah of the Supreme Court on the 24<sup>th</sup> of that month for cash, as a resolution of a case *Goode V Riley*, unless the writs of *Fieri Facias* were satisfied.<sup>36</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> November the property was conveyed to Robert Snowden, averting the auction, yet this was not the end of the matter, in March 1888, the estate of Joseph Riley, queried whether the conveyance from George Riley<sup>37</sup> to Snowden was intended merely as a security rather than an absolute conveyance.<sup>38</sup> It was ultimately purchased by Samuel Horden.<sup>39</sup>

In late 1882 a portion comprising 1710 acres of the southern portion of *Broomfield* was subdivided into smaller allotments and is adjacent to the study area. This area roughly corresponds to the portion to be allocated to the Trustees of the estate of Edward Riley senior. Auction notices from December 1882, as 1689 acres divided into blocks from 5 to 40 acres. The auction was ultimately held at Riley's Royal Hotel Bowral on Saturday 31st March 1883.<sup>40</sup> It encompassed the area where George's original homestead had been constructed in 1829.

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<sup>35</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 October 1882, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 November 1883, p.17

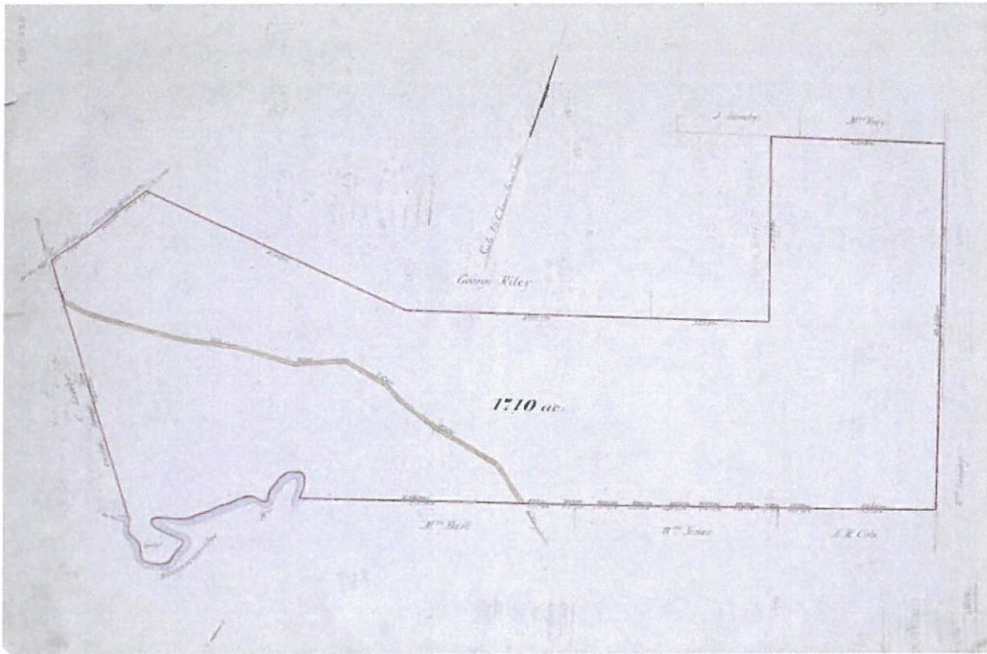
<sup>37</sup> Reference to George here is confusing as the Supreme Court auction notice refers to it as the property of Joseph Riley. There is no doubt that George was the owner – See PA No.6276.

<sup>38</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1888, p.13

<sup>39</sup> LTO: DP 1416

<sup>40</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1882, p.17; LTO: CT Vol 730 Fol 226; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1882, p.17; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 1883, p.17;





**Figure 6** This plan shows that part of *Bloomfield* that was subdivided from the original holding in 1882. This appears to be the share allocated to the trustees of the estate Edward Riley senior. It was on this portion the George constructed his first house in 1829 and where he lived for the next 10 years and from presumably from where he ran his store.[LTO: CT Vol 730 Fol 226.]



**Figure 7** A plan of the subdivision of part of the *Bloomfield Estate* to the south of the study area in the 1880s. A notation, above the plan title, indicates that Samuel Hordern was owner of the adjoining portion. [SRNSW: Supreme Court, Equity Division, Walker v Riley, Case No. 2923 at 3/3867.]



# BROOMFIELD ESTATE

THIS VALUABLE ESTATE WILL BE SOLD BY  
PUBLIC AUCTION, ON  
**SATURDAY, 31ST MARCH,**  
AT 2.30 P.M.

**RILEY'S ROYAL HOTEL, BOWRAL.**

*The Property consists partly of Beautiful Undulating Country, presenting numerous sites very suitable for VILLAGE RESIDENCES, ORCHARDS, GARDENS, and partly of Hilly Country covered with Fine Timber suitable for FENCING AND BUILDING PURPOSES.*

This is an IMPORTANT ITEM, as the want of GOOD TIMBER is much felt in the locality, most of that available having LONG SINCE BEEN DESTROYED.

*The Subdivision has been carried out in an Exceedingly Liberal Manner, and in conformity with the Natural Features of the Land.*

The Views are beautifully varied, and extend over the whole of the surrounding country.

## TITLE, TORRENS' ACT.

TERMS.—10 per cent. Deposit, 15 per cent. by P. N. at three months, Balance in three years, bearing interest at 6 per cent. Secured on the property, with option to pay off at any time.

**NOBION & SMITH,**  
Solicitors, SPRING ST.

# BROOMFIELD ESTATE, BOWRAL.

To be Sold by Order of the Master-in-Equity,  
ON  
**SATURDAY, March 31,**

At 2.30 P.M.,

**RILEY'S ROYAL HOTEL, BOWRAL**

Large Blocks—ACRES, ACRES.

## TORRENS' TITLE.

### EASIEST TERMS, viz.

10 per cent. DEPOSIT, 15 per cent. by Promissory Note at 3 months, the Balance in 3 years, bearing interest at 6 per cent. secured on the Property, with OPTION TO PAY OFF AT ANY TIME WITHOUT NOTICE.

**ATCHISON & SCHLEICHER,**

Civil Engineers & Licensed Surveyors,

144 PITT STREET,

In conjunction with

J. F. MANN, Licensed Surveyor.

Cibbs, Shallard, & Co., Printers, 70 Pitt Street.

# BROOMFIELD ESTATE, BOWRAL.

2,000 FEET ABOVE SEA-LEVEL.  
**1,689 ACRES,**

SUBDIVIDED INTO

Large Blocks of from 6 to 50 Acres each

WITH  
*Frontages to the Old Sydney, Bong Bong, Kangaloon, and other Roads, all 66 FEET WIDE.*

Only separated by the Winge-carribee River from THROSBY PARK

SPLENDID RICH LAND. PLENTY OF WATER.

## TORRENS' TITLE.

SALE DAY,

**SATURDAY, 31st MARCH,**

AT 2.30 P.M.,

**RILEY'S ROYAL HOTEL, BOWRAL.**

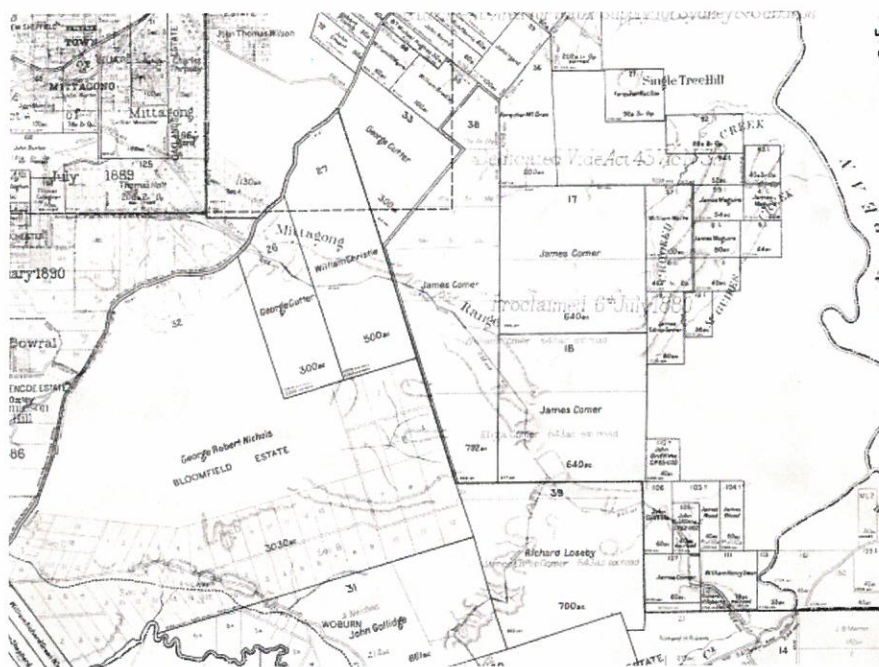
**BATT, RODD, & PURVES,**

AUCTIONEERS.

TEMPORARY SALE ROOMS—

Corner George & Margaret Sts.

Figure 8 The accompanying advertising brochure.



**Figure 9** This undated Parish of Mittagong Map shows the remains of the *Bloomfield Estate* after subdivision in the early 1880s which was purchased by Samuel Horden in 1884 [Lands Department: Historic Map Preservation Project Image Id: 10210101]

George Riley died from bronchitis in June 1886 just short of his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday at his daughter, Mrs George Clarke's house in Bowral, where he had lived for the last months of his life. He was reputedly the oldest resident of the district. His obituary in the *Bowral Free Press* claimed that he at one time owned the Riley Estate at Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills and also owned property at Parramatta.<sup>41</sup> In the Berrima District he 'owned' the Riley estate at Sutton Forrest, *Bloomfield* and in his own right the 2560 acre, *Dowdell's Folly*. George had a great interest in race horses, dogs and bred cattle. He owned many good race horses which he ran at Bendooley (Berrima), Moss Vale and elsewhere and also enjoyed the hunt. He lived at *Bloomfield* until its subdivision and sale where he kept a 'superior' dairy of about 100 cows, a pack of 52 hounds that he had purchased from Captain Weston and engaged in farming and grazing. He was the first to import Neapolitan pigs and was the first colonist to export sheep and cattle to New Zealand. He was described as a 'great cattle breeder' and an 'excellent dairy farmer'. He had 12 children and at the time of his death there were 76 grand and great grand children. His wife had died in 1867.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> It is probable that George's ownership of the Riley Estate was in association with other members of the family, as was *Bloomfield*.

<sup>42</sup> *Bowral Free Press*, 9 June 1886, p.2; Berrima Historical Society File, transcript of an account of George Riley's soon after his death; Carol Nolan and Carolyn Dougherty, *Digging up the Past, Berrima District, Southern Highlands, NSW*, pp.290-292.



## 4 The Hordern Proprietorship, 1884 – 1953

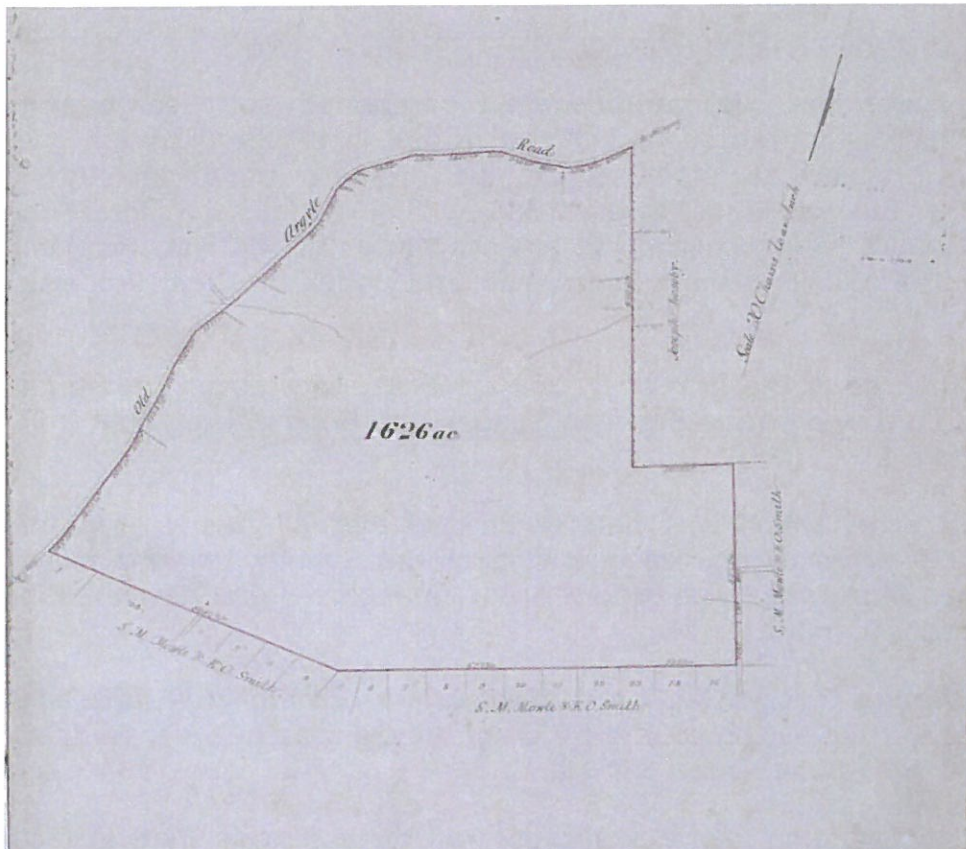
Not only was the original *Bloomfield* partitioned but George and Joseph Riley had been successfully sued and in the financial fall out lost the property to creditors. Samuel Hordern purchased three portions of *Bloomfield* in January 1884, including that part containing George Riley's residence and the area known as Riley's Flat. He then brought the following three parcels of land under the Real Property Act:

- 748 acres of the former *Bloomfield Estate* located on the south side of the old road between Sydney and Bong Bong. [Area 2 in Figure 5]
- 760 acres which was part of Edward Riley's original grant of 3,030 acres on the eastern side of the Sydney to Bong Bong Road [Assumed to be part of Area 1 in Figure 5 and described in Figures 7 and 8.]
- 857 acres that was also part of the original *Bloomfield Estate* and was located on the southern side of the old road between Sydney and Bong Bong. [Area 3 in Figure 5]

Despite the wording in the application, all three parcels were in fact part of the former *Bloomfield*. The total, including improvements, was valued at £13,000.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> SRNSW: Primary Application Packet 6276 at 6/10097. Primary Application No. 6276.



**Figure 10** Samuel Hordern's purchase of 1626 acres, part of the *Broomfield Estate*, January 1884. [LTO: CT Vol 758 Fol 156]

The certificate of title issued in September 1883 as result of the real property application by Hordern was for an area of 1626 acres, somewhat short of the 2365 acres tally of the above three portions.<sup>44</sup>

#### **4.1 Samuel Hordern, 1849-1909**

Samuel Hordern was the second son of Anthony Hordern of the retailing family and the grandson of Anthony (snr) and Ann Hordern who had immigrated to NSW in 1825. Samuel was born in 1849 and after being educated at Fort Street and Camden College he entered his father's firm at the age of 19 and, after the death of his brother Anthony in 1886 bought out his share of the company. Samuel had named his new acquisition *Retford Park*, a name linked to the home of his grandmother at Retford, Nottingham. The place was also memorialised in the name *Retford Hall* at Darling Point, which had been built by his father, Anthony.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> LTO: CT Vol 758 Fol 156

<sup>45</sup> Ruth Teale, Anthony Hordern (1819-1876), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.423-424.



The eminence of the widely known and respected Hordern name has been attributed to the exceptional achievements of Sam Hordern as proprietor of family firm. From a young age he had an induction into the firm and early responsibility. He and his brother, Anthony, had been given partnerships in the firm on reaching maturity by their father and they conducted an almost 'explosive' expansion in the 10 years from 1876 when they came into the proprietorship. The business, they inherited was sound, but modest. The shop, a drapery, was in George Street and had a staff of 11. Sam and Anthony expanded to become a universal providores, bringing under one roof a variety of goods usually sold in specialised outlets. They added to their London buying office, offices in Scotland, Ireland, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy and China. They constructed their 'Palace Emporium' at Haymarket on land inherited from their father. When Sam became the sole proprietor on the death of Anthony in 1886, they were Sydney's leading retailer and he was in a position to 'live off the fat of Anthony Hordern and Sons for the rest of his life',<sup>46</sup> but he embarked on a further expansion program that extended until 1900. He expanded the Haymarket store and erected additional warehouse and auxiliary buildings elsewhere in the city. In addition he established factories to supply goods to the store. According to Horden family historian, Lesley Hordern, the source of Sam's wealth was Anthony Hordern & Sons and that 'money making was Sam's extraordinary talent'<sup>47</sup>. He used funds created by his expansion of the operations of the company to invest in property and also to pursue his interest in horse racing and stock breeding. Sam Hordern was initially involved in the sport of trotting, an interest he pursued from 1885 until the early 1890s when he developed an interest in thoroughbred racing, but continued to breed trotters and exhibit them at the Agricultural Society shows. As well as stables at Randwick he also established a stud at *Wilton Park*, near Picton that he purchased in 1891. A complex of stables at *Wilton Park* are believed to have been designed by Albert Bond, architect of the Anthony Hordern and Sons buildings. In the late 1890s Horden gave up horse racing and concentrated on horse breeding at *Wilton Park* importing blood stock from England, Wales and the United States to improve the quality of trotters, thoroughbreds, ponies, hackneys and carriage horses that were held in high regard and were very successful competitors at the Agricultural Society's shows.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p.176.

<sup>47</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p.176..

<sup>48</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, pp.150 -152; 174; 178-182.





**Figure 11** Retford Park, early days. n.d. [Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p.173.]



**Figure 12** Retford Park in Sam Horden's II residency. [Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p.328.]



Hordern was also involved in cattle breeding which he had commenced in partnership with his brother at *Greenwich Park*, near Marulan in 1874, an enterprise that was not initially successful due to the rugged nature of the country. This experience was the catalyst for the purchase of part of the *Bloomfield Estate* and the creation of *Retford Park*. The Italianate house was, like that at *Wilton Park*, designed by Albert Bond and appears to have been influenced by the design of *Retford Hall* at Darling Point that had been designed by Edmund Blacket. It was constructed on a rise overlooking the surrounding country and set in a garden of 6 acres.

Sam Hordern established *Retford Park* as a cattle stud where he specialised in breeding Jersey and Ayreshire cattle that became very successful in agricultural shows. In the 1870s he was noted at the 'great Shorthorn auctions.'<sup>49</sup> In 1888 he emerged as a major exhibitor of horses, ponies and cattle. He won one champion and six first prizes. His success expanded in 1889 and throughout the 1890s his entries at the show were regularly described in superlatives.<sup>50</sup> Hordern also bred coaching horses, Hungarian ponies, and dairy cattle on the property. Stock were regularly advertised for sale in the Sydney papers. In 1890 Hordern's horse Retford was a regular at Sydney race meetings. In 1893 he won the Sydney Cup with Realm and The Metropolitan in 1896 with The Skipper.<sup>51</sup> His interest and success inspired his children Sam II and Anthony (Tony) in particular, both of who became distinguished breeders that won international recognition. His grandchildren, Sam III and Anthony junior, also made a distinguished contribution to stud breeding, particularly the Quarter Horse, Santa Gertrudis and British White cattle. Sam Hordern was also on the executive of the Pigeon, Poultry and Canary Society of New South Wales, later part of the Kennel Club and was on the Council of the Agricultural Society, he was made vice president in 1888 and held the position for 20 years.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> M.H. Ellis, *The Beef Shorthorn in Australia*, n.p., Sydney, 1932, p.212.

<sup>50</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, pp.182-183.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Teale, Anthony Hordern (1819-1876), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4, Melbourne University press, 1972, pp.423-424.

<sup>52</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p. 183-188.

**PRIZE PEDIGREE STOCK.**

**M**R. JOHN G. MORRIS will SELL on THURSDAY, MARCH 28, at 12 o'clock in the forenoon, under instructions from SAMUEL HORDERN, Esq., on his Estate, **RETTFORD PARK, BOWRAL.**

**PRIZE PEDIGREE STOCK**  
as follows:—

**COACHING STALLION,**  
**SUPERIOR COACHING HORSES and MARES,**  
All bays, with black points, and secured by Mr. Hordern without regard to cost, with foal and sired to the imported roadster **COCK ROBIN**, and the beautiful black trotting stallion **RANDWICK VERMONT**, the property of Mr. Hordern.

A few of Mr. Hordern's well-known  
**HUNGARIAN PONIES.**

Team of **WORKING BULLOCKS** and **WAGGON**  
Three-year-old Draught Stallion by **TOPSMAN**, who never was beaten.

**DRAUGHT MARES**  
**AYRSHIRE BULLS**  
**AYRSHIRE HEIFERS.**  
Pedigrees of which date back to Ayrshire Herd Book.

**ALDERNEY BULLS**  
**ALDERNEY HEIFERS,**  
Bred from prize Alderneys purchased by Mr. Hordern from Mr. Hyam, and which took all the prizes at the Centennial Show, as well as from others imported from Melbourne.

Mr. Hordern's  
**NOTED DAIRY HERD**  
will also be sold.

This is an opportunity for acquiring really good things, and for breeders to improve their stock, which occurs but once in a lifetime, and should not be missed. Want of space prevents the most ordinary justice being done to the above magnificent stock, which are sold to enable Mr. Hordern to make room for blood and trotting stock. Full particulars on day of sale.

**JOHN G. MORRIS,**  
Auctioneer,  
Bowral.

**Figure 13** An advertisement from *The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 March 1889, p.18.

Messrs. William Inglis and Son, report the sale, on account of Messrs. Trestrail and Burns, of the imported trotting mares **Countess, Bell, and May**, to Mr. S. Hordern, **Retford Park, Bowral**, for 600 guineas. The mares are part of a consignment of trotting stock that arrived by the steamship **Alameda** last May, and exhibit quality and breeding. **Countess** is a chestnut, 6 years old, by John M. Patchem, from a mare by Speculation, and her grandsire was George M. Patchem (2.21) sire of **Wells Fargo** (2.18 1/2), **Sam Purdy** (2.20 1/2), **Vanderlyn** (2.21), **Ben Ali** (2.22), and many other good performers. Her grand dam was **Genevieve**, by **Hambletonian**, so that, on the score of breeding, she has plenty to recommend her. **Bell** is a handsome chestnut, by **Priam** (sire of **Honesty**, 2.25 1/2), a son of **Whipple's Hambletonian** and **Revere**, by the imported thoroughbred horse **Glencoe**. **May** is by **Frank Hunter** (son of **Skenandob**), from a mare by **Chieftain** (sire of **Cairo**, 2.26; **Defiance**, 2.17 1/2), and **Chieftain** was by **Hiatogue**. Such well-bred mares mated with a sire like **Judge Bolden** should produce first-class stock.

**Figure 14** A report of breeding stock purchased by Samuel Hordern in 1890. [*The Sydney Morning Herald* 12 July 1890, p.6.]



**Horses and Vehicles.**

**STAND THIS SEASON**  
at  
**RETTFORD PARK, BOWRAL.**

**JUDGE BELDEN,**  
16 1/2 hands,  
**IMPORTED TROTTING STALLION. TRIAL, 2.17;**  
**RECORD, 2.51.**  
Is a beautiful Mahogany Bay, black points; amiable temper and good constitution, without blemish, and as sound as a bell. His freaks in America are remarkably handsome and good gaited.

**SIRE ELMO** (891 American Stud Book.) Elmo sired Coma, 2.39; Alfred R., 2.31; Elma, 2.24; and L. C. Lee, 2.15. Longfellow, Judge Belden's full brother, has up to the present time a record of 2.34, and has also trotted 2 miles in 5.4 and 2.9 in two consecutive heats.

**1st DAM.** **PRENTICE,** by Niagara, also of Cobb and Crocker's mare, 2.25 to pole, and Lady Hoag, trial, 2.31.

Terms, £10 10s one mare; £9 9s three or over.

**BLACKLARK,**  
Jet Black Pony Stallion, imported from Victoria, born in 1883. He is a very fast trotter, and took last year the following first prizes:—Balarat, in a class of 7; Talbot, 12; Clunna, 7; Kyneton, 18; Smeaton, 14; Cargaret, 19; Hallan, 21; Deane-ford, 20; Daylesford, 24, never yet having known the degradation of being defeated.

**SIRE TIGER,** **IMPORTED.** Tiger took 3 first at the principal shows in Victoria.

**DAM NELLIE.** **NELLIE** won several trotting pony races in Victoria. Sire of Nellie was King Jemmy, the winner of 22 first prizes at the principal shows. Was never beaten.

Terms, £3 3s.

**PONY STALLION COCK ROBIN,**  
13 hands.  
Bay, black points. A perfect model, imported from Victoria.

**SIRE ANADOOBY.** Timor Pony, imported.

**DAM QUEEN CODGER.** By Old King Codger, imported. King Codger took 29 first prizes.

Terms, £3 3s.

**BONNIE CHARLIE, JUNIOR,**  
11.3 hands.

**SIRE BONNIE CHARLIE,** Imported, dam Beauty, a pure Hungarian mare. He is a perfect picture, with plenty of bone and substance, as quiet as a lamb, and grand constitution.

Terms, £3 3s.

Mares met at train. Every care taken but no responsibility. All payments to be made before removal of mare on or before the first January. All letters addressed to **MANATEE,** care of S. Hordern, Retford Park, Bowral.

Promptly attended to.

**THE SECOND SENSATION** (Imported)  
**AMERICAN TROTTING STALLION,**  
the property of  
**Mr. S. HORDERN,**  
Retford Park,  
BOWRAL,  
will Travel KIAMA and Surrounding Districts.

**SENSATION THE SECOND** was bred by L. S. Savage, Esq., New Nevada, America.  
He is a beautiful brown, 16 1/2 inch, good constitution, and as sound as a bell.  
Sired by Sir David, by Black Hawk; dam Delfounder, by Hambletonian.

**TERMS:**  
Single Mare ... .. £5 5 0  
Three or more, property of same owner, each ... 4 0 0

Letters, &c., addressed **DAVID POWER,** Kiama, promptly attended to.

**COCK ROBIN** (Imported).  
**ENGLISH ROADSTER or COACHING STALLION,**  
the property of  
**Mr. S. HORDERN,**  
Retford Park,  
BOWRAL,  
will Travel This season throughout the district of **PARRAMATTA, EASTERN CREEK, SOUTH CREEK,** and Surrounding Districts.

**COCK ROBIN** is a beautiful bay, 15-1, as strong as a castle, with splendid style and grand action, good disposition, and as sound as a bell. He will commence his round of travel from Mr. JOHN HAMILTON'S, WEST WORTHVILLE, who will furnish any further information required.

**TERMS:**  
Single Mare ... .. £4 4 0  
Three or more, property of same owner, each ... 3 10 0

Figure 15 An advertisement for stud services by horses from Retford Park in The Sydney Morning Herald 7 September 1889 p.17.

A wing was added to *Retford Park House* on the east in 1907. The addition was designed by the architectural firm Morrow and de Putron who also built *Babworth House* in 1912 for the younger Samuel Hordern, *Milton Park* and additions to the Palace Emporium.

#### **4.2 Sir Samuel Hordern (1876 -1956)**

After Samuel's death in 1909 the property was transferred to Samuel Hordern, Anthony Hordern and John Booth. In 1935 Samuel Hordern, the younger, became a joint owner, a tenant in common with the other three owners. In 1940 Anthony Hordern, the younger, also became a joint tenant of the property.<sup>53</sup>

Sam Hordern II took over *Retford Park*, while his brother, Tony leased *Wilton Park* and in 1910 bought *Milton Park* adjacent to *Retford Park*. *Milton Park* was sold to the Texas based King Ranch in 1960, which also purchased *Retford Park* about the same time. *Milton Park* is featured in M. H. Ellis's 1932 history, *The Beef Shorthorn in Australia* as a particularly important stud property, and Anthony as a particularly important breeder of shorthorns.<sup>54</sup>

In 1910 when on a trip to the UK, Sam purchased Jerseys and Ayreshire for *Retford Park* and Guernseys, Herefords and Beef Shorthorns for Anthony, selecting the stock from agricultural prize winners. On taking over the property Samuel II disposed of all stock of inferior pedigree to be replaced by his acquisition in the UK of '... one of the most valuable lots of British pedigree stock ever sent to Australia'.<sup>55</sup> His purchases included Gartonius, a prize winning hackney stallion, Traveller's Joy, a Welsh pony stallion, Champion of St Peter and Matilda's Noble, champion jersey bulls. Heifers included Pontorson 12<sup>th</sup>, Pearl, Royal Bess and Noble's Twylsh - all with impressive lineages. Ayrshire cattle included the bull Nether Craig Silver Crest, and heifers, Lochfergus Rosebud, Lochfergus Rhoda, and Glenshamrock Meg. On his return, Sam pursued the breeding of thoroughbreds, hackneys, hunters, Welsh ponies, dogs - Scottish and fox terriers - and homing pigeons. *Retford Park* was one of the properties included in *The Pastoral Homes of Australia* which placed some emphasis on Samuel II's practical management of the property, despite his responsibilities to the city mercantile establishment.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> LTO: CT: Vol. 758 Fol. 156.

<sup>54</sup> M.H. Ellis, *The Beef Shorthorn in Australia*, n.p., Sydney, 1932, pp. 212-217.

<sup>55</sup> *The Pastoral Homes of Australia*, New South Wales & Queensland, The Pastoralists' Review Propy. Ltd., Melbourne, 1911, p.151

<sup>56</sup> *The Pastoral Homes of Australia*, New South Wales & Queensland, The Pastoralists' Review Propy. Ltd., Melbourne, 1911, pp.151-154.

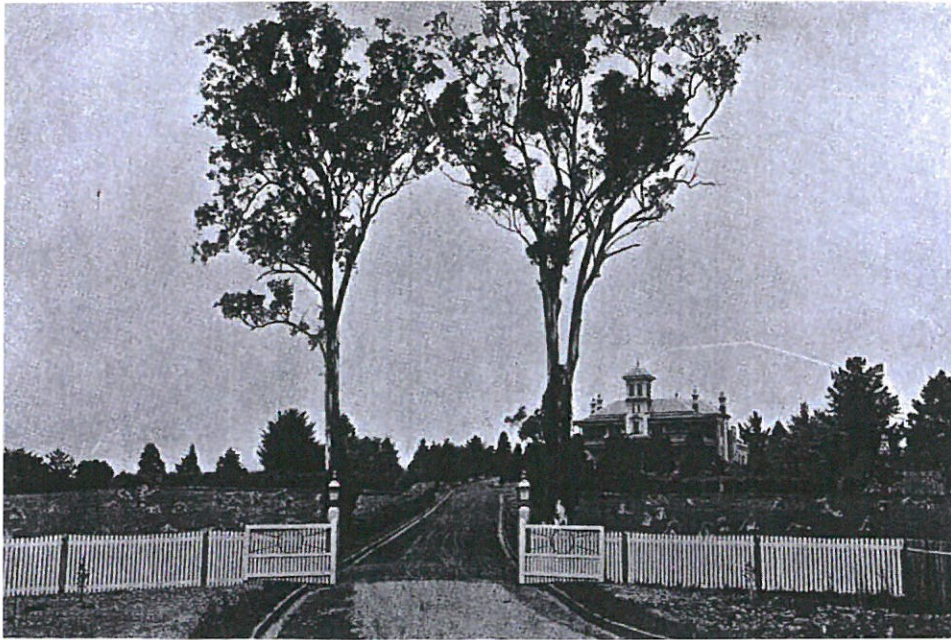


He was ambitious to improve the breeding of cattle and horses and a regular exhibitor and winner at the Royal Agricultural Society's Easter Show. The property had been improved and had attained a park like appearance, divided into twenty-six paddocks, all supplied with water from creeks, dams and springs. The entry listed the numerous stud stock by name with their lineage and their many prizes.



**Figure 16** Retford Park, c.1910. [*The Pastoral Homes of Australia, New South Wales & Queensland, The Pastoralists' Review Propy. Ltd., Melbourne, 1911*].





**Figure 17** Entrance to *Retford Park*, c.1910. [*The Pastoral Homes of Australia, New South Wales & Queensland, The Pastoralists' Review Propy. Ltd., Melbourne, 1911*].



**Figure 18** Stallion boxes at *Retford Park*, c.1910. [*The Pastoral Homes of Australia, New South Wales & Queensland, The Pastoralists' Review Propy. Ltd., Melbourne, 1911*].

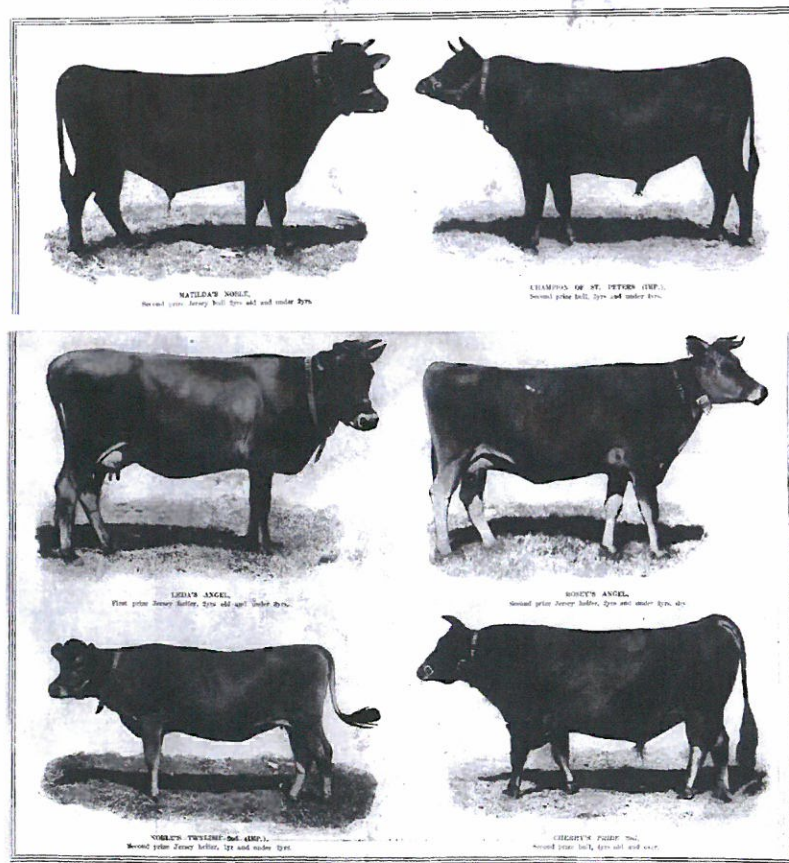


In 1912 another Bowral property, *Hopewood*, was purchased by a Hordern, Sam's brother, Lebbeus, who bred Clydesdales and ponies. Sam Hordern II took on many of the interests of his father and expanded on them. He was president of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales from 1915-1941 and a committee member of the Australian Jockey Club from 1917-1944. He was the owner or co-owner of winners of the Melbourne Cup, the A.J.C. Derby and the Caulfield Cup. Lady Charlotte Hordern has been credited with the development of the gardens at *Retford Park* during their tenure.<sup>57</sup>

26 THE SYDNEY MAIL, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 1911.

### PRIZE-WINNING CATTLE AT THE ROYAL SHOW

Samuel Hordern's Retford Park Stud, Bowral.



**Figure 19** Samuel Hordern's success at the 1911 Royal Easter Show was the subject of a detailed article featured in *The Sydney Mail*. They included a number of the cattle purchased in the UK in 1910.

<sup>57</sup> Lesley Hordern, *Children of One Family*, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p.328; 350; Caroline Simpson, 'Hordern, Sir Samuel (1876-1956)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.365-367.

**4.3 Views of Retford Park from the Hordern Photo Albums  
in the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW – PXA  
918.**



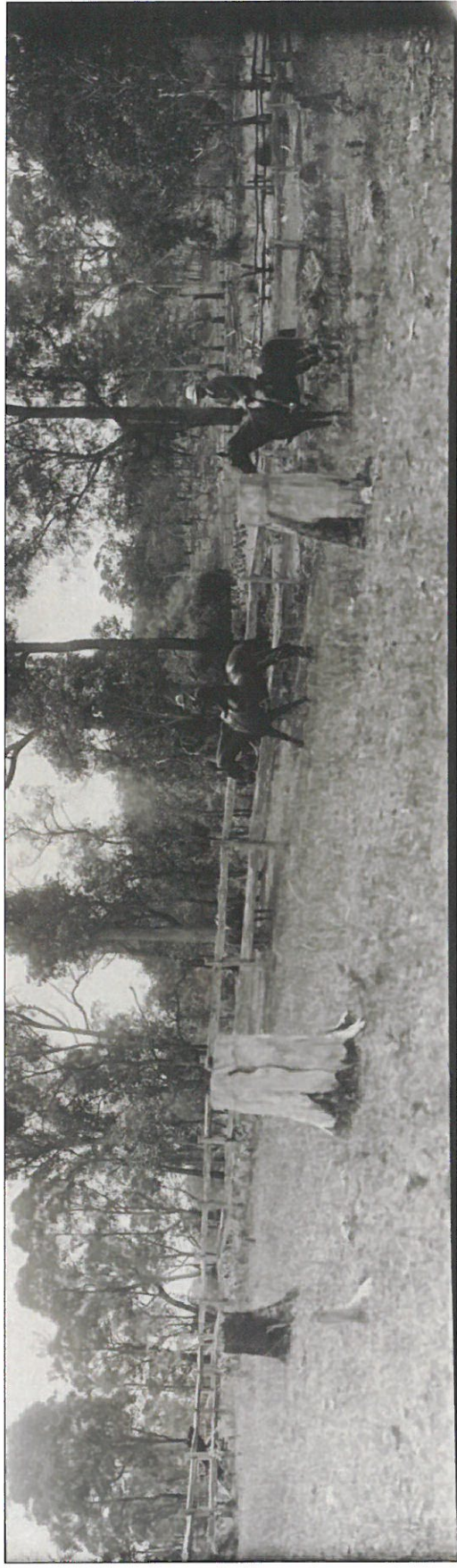
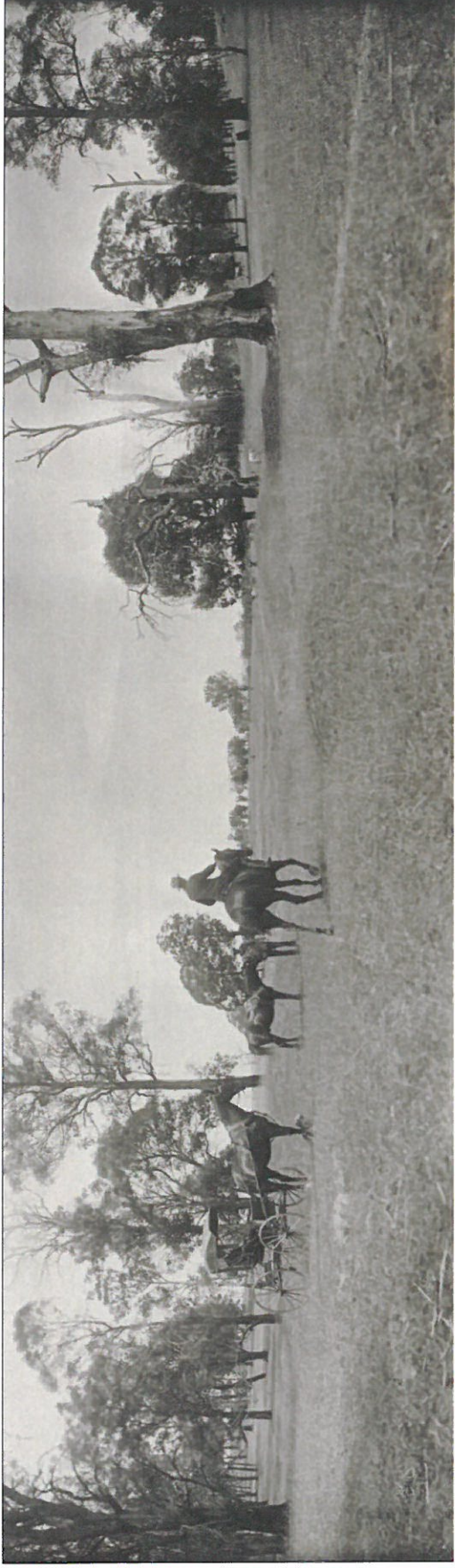
**Figure 20** View across *Retford Park* paddocks with the house in the distance to the left. Undated, but, c 1900.





**Figure 21** An undated view of farm buildings and cottages, undated, but c.1900.

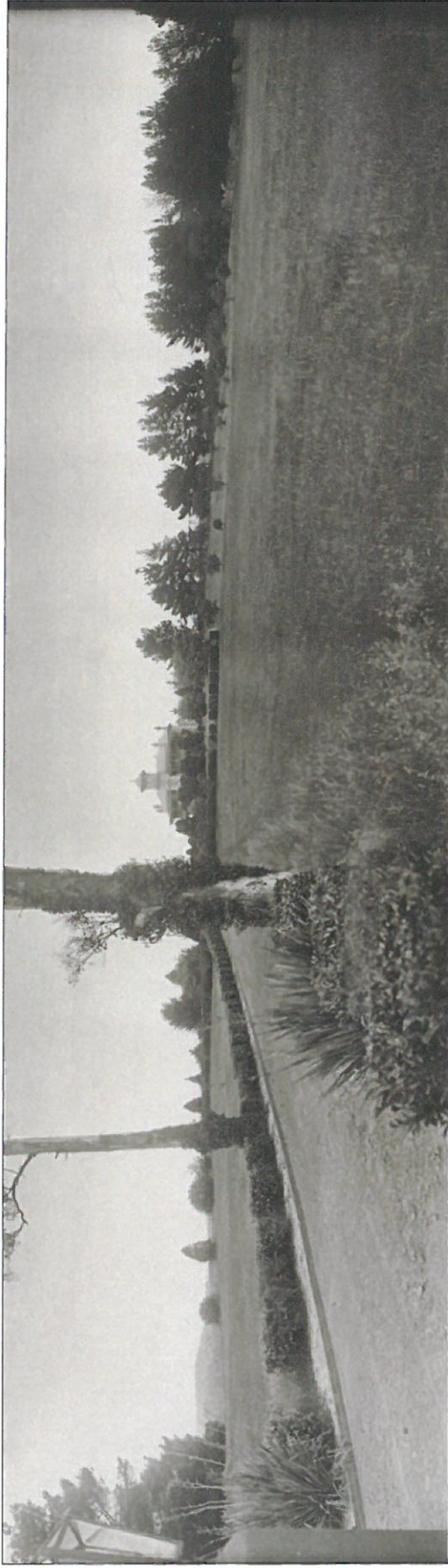
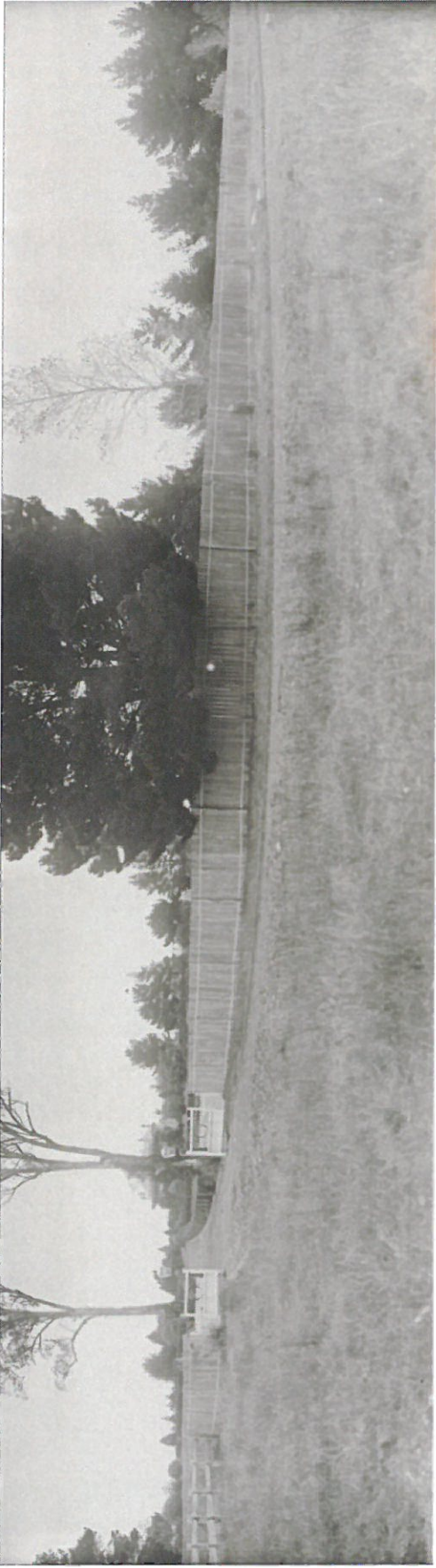




**Figures 22 and 23** Two general views of the property c. 1908.



**Figures 24, 25, 26 and 27** Four contemporaneous views of the drive and inner entrance to the house and garden area. c.1908. One of the gum trees is still standing.











**Figure 28** The Old South Road entrance to *Retford Park*, c.1908, this entrance remains evident today.



**Figure 29** The former service driveway c.1908, now absorbed into the arboretum.



**Figures 30 and 31** Motor touring parties at the front of the house, c.1908.





#### 4.4 Samuel Hordern, 1909-1960

From 1948 Samuel Hordern continued the stud breeding at *Retford Park*. The stock included Shorthorn, Devon, Hereford, Aberdeen Angus, Jersey and Santa Gertrudis. His other livestock included Welsh ponies, Suffolk Punch and Quarter horses, Ryeland and Southdown sheep, pigs, Labradors, whippets and Pekingese dogs, pheasants and canaries. He became prominent in cattle circles and had links with King Ranch, a Texas based company that had purchased *Milton Park* and introduced Santa Gertrudis cattle to Australia in the early 1950s. Like his predecessors, Samuel Hordern III was also active in the various breeding, equestrian and agricultural associations, and the Royal Agricultural Society. Despite his involvement as a partner in the stockbroking firm Hordern, Utz and Bode, *Retford Park* was Sam's major interest and passion. He spent most of his time there and dedicated his energy to agricultural associations and stock breeding.<sup>58</sup>



**Figure 32** This post 1930 Parish of Mittagong Map shows the intensification of development in the vicinity of *Retford Park* and the extent of the unchanged boundary of the estate under the Horderns. [Lands Department: Historic Map Preservation Project Image Id: 10209701]

<sup>58</sup> James Fairfax, interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

## 5 The Final Hordern Years → King Ranch

The property stayed in the Hordern family's hands until at least August 1953 when it was sold to business associates, stockbroker Lennox Bode of Hordern, Utz and Bode and Stanley Walton. The family continued to live there and almost certainly retained a financial interest through company associations. Bode and Walton almost immediately transferred the holding to Kamilaroi Pty Ltd, later known as Gibraltar Pty Ltd.

### 5.1 Jack Hickson photographs, 1957, in the State Library of NSW

In December 1957 Jack Hickson took a series of photographs which are a valuable document of *Retford Park* at that time, those of the house are likely to depict how it was prior to James Fairfax's purchase of the property in 1964. He subsequently undertook a complete redecoration.



**Figure 33** The front hall room.





**Figure 34** The billiard room. The billiard table was retained for a number of years by Fairfax and finally was donated to the Police Boys Club at Broadway.

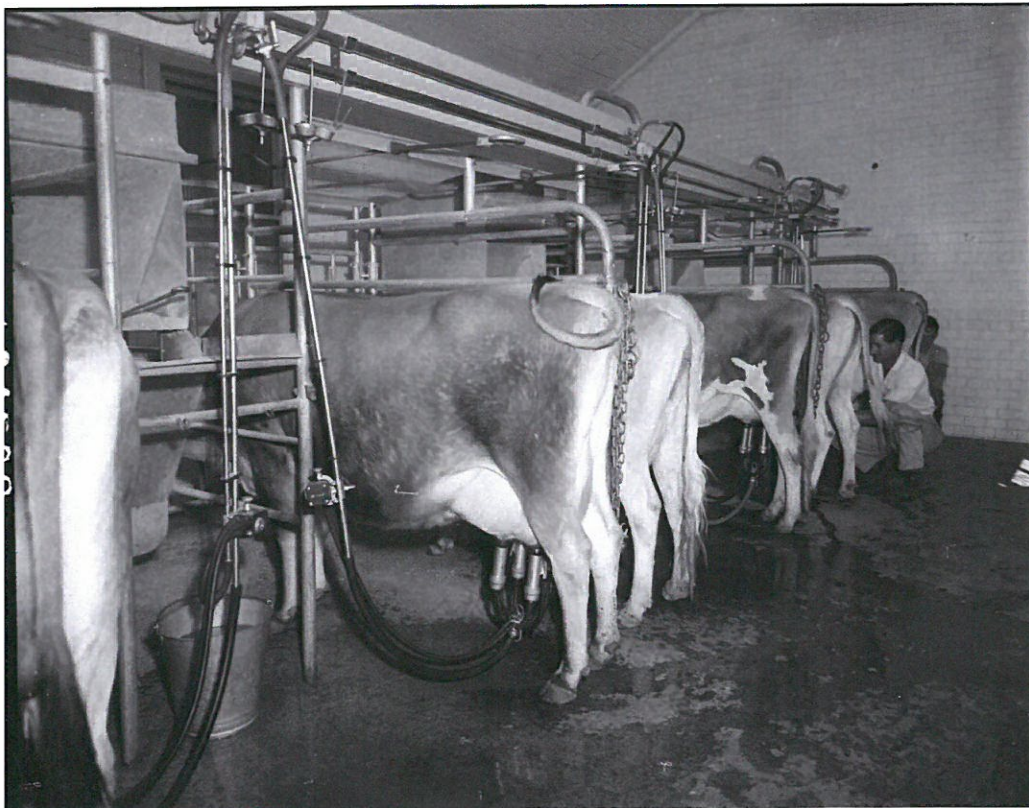


**Figure 35** Bedroom, now the blue room.



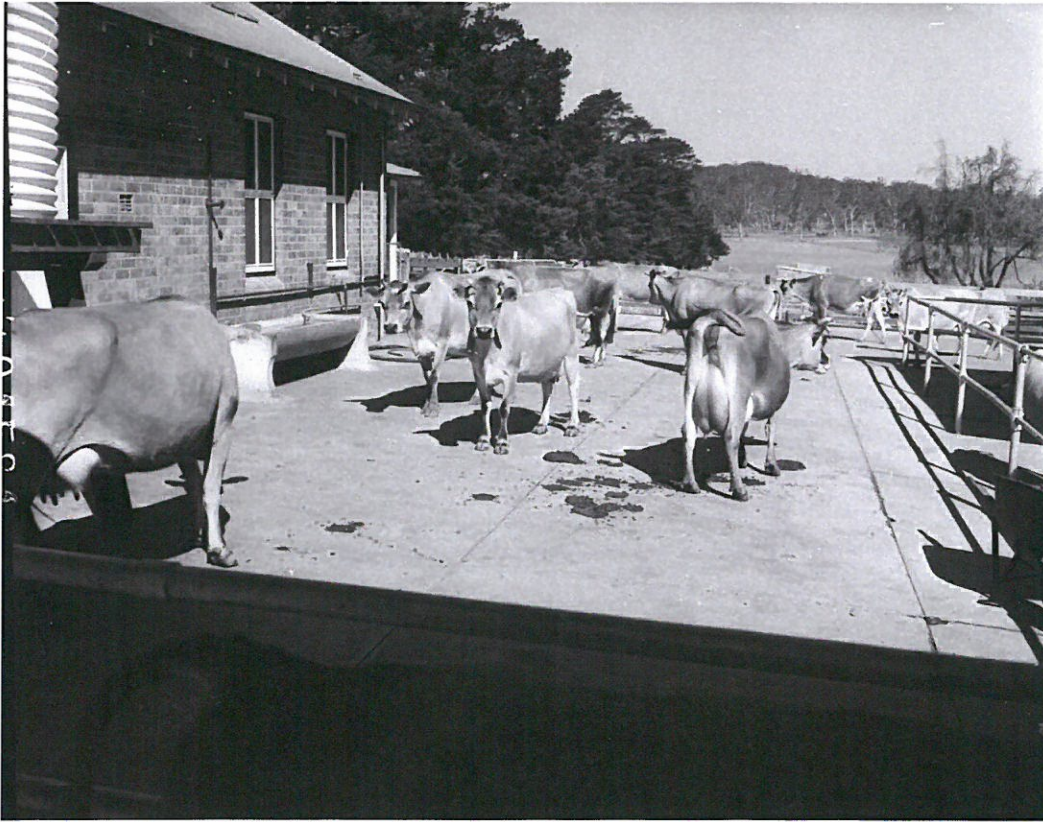


**Figure 36** Stud Cattle stalls.



**Figure 37** Cows being milked in the dairy.





**Figure 38** Dairy cows in the dairy yard in front of Cherrytree Barn.



**Figure 39** Cherrytree Barn from the rear.





**Figure 40** View to main house past staff cottages and stables.



**Figure 41** Stables and cottages.





**Figure 42** Stud cattle in front of stalls.



**Figure 43** Stables with stud horses.





**Figure 44** Buildings used for stud cattle.



**Figure 45** Sheep grazing in what is now parkland.





**Figure 46** Dairy cows in stalls.



**Figure 47** Chicken run.





**Figure 48** Garden in front of main house.



**Figure 49** Front Garden.





**Figure 50** Another view of front garden and lawns.



**Figure 51** Looking to the main house across grounds.



In July 1960 Sam Hordern died suddenly after a car accident, an event which led to the departure of the Hordern family. In November 1963 King Ranch (Australia) Pty. Ltd., put the homestead portion of *Retford Park* up for auction, seeing it as surplus to their needs. The area was to include the homestead and buildings and encompass an area of 179 acres. It was proposed that should the reserve not be met, then the homestead and buildings and 30 acres would be offered. The auction brochure described the appointments in the following terms:

The homestead area comprises a magnificent stone colonial mansion of 25 rooms, manager's residence of nine rooms, village of 8 cottages, two horse stables, an enclosed round house, seven cattle stores with numerous adjoining yards. The 179 acres is subdivided into 21 paddocks, all rich pastoral land.

In the house there were:

... three large reception rooms, dining room seven bedrooms, six maids' rooms, staff dining room, six bathrooms, kitchen, store and office. The homestead is centrally heated and has all modern amenities.

Nearby, is the Manager's residence of nine rooms, with all modern conveniences. There is a village of eight cottages, all in good order and connected with water, electricity and some gas.

The homestead garden comprises half an acre of sweeping lawns, around flower beds and flowering shrubs. Rare exotic and native trees skirt the gracious driveway.

An excellent tennis court is illuminated for night play.

Present facilities could accommodate over 100 people. With modifications to other buildings, the figure could well be increased.<sup>59</sup>

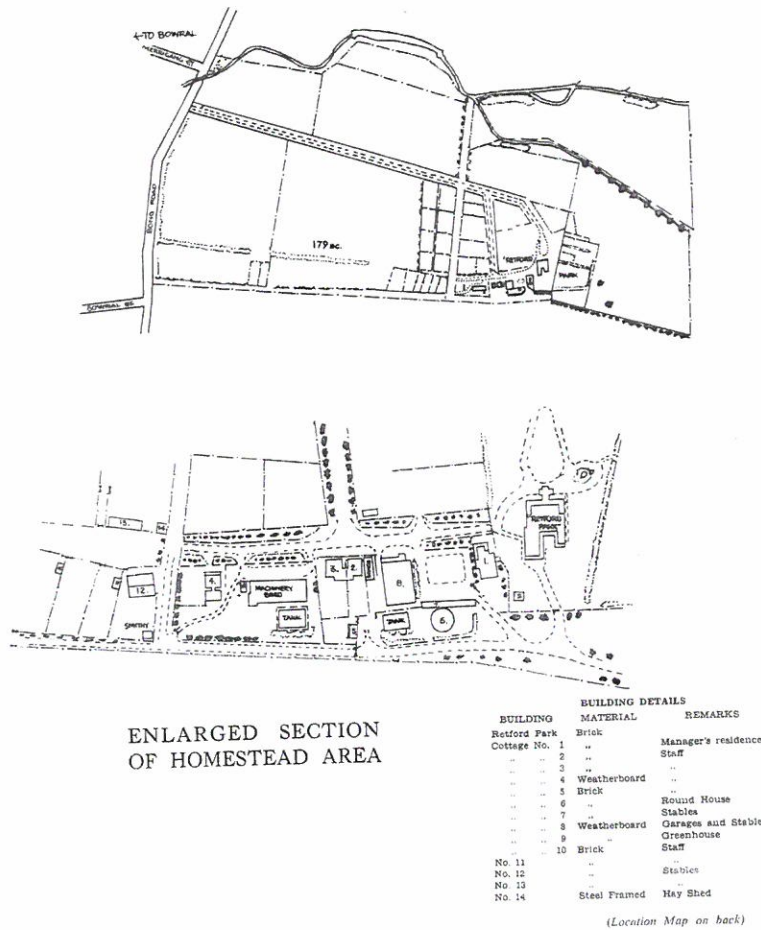
The property was promoted as ideal for a stud breeding enterprise, a school, golf or country club or agricultural college. Another unremarked feature was that many of the fences were lower than usual so that they were of a suitable height to practise show jumping.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> 'For Sale By Auction "*Retford Park*" Bowral New South Wales Australia Under Instructions from King Ranch (Australia) Pty. Ltd. At The Royal Exchange, Sydney - November, 1963 by Australian Mercantile, Land & Finance Company, Limited (incorporated in England, 1863) Sydney and Moss Vale and P. Westbrook and Son Bowral Agents in Conjunction'.

<sup>60</sup> Alan Butcher, Interview with Sue Rosen, 2011.

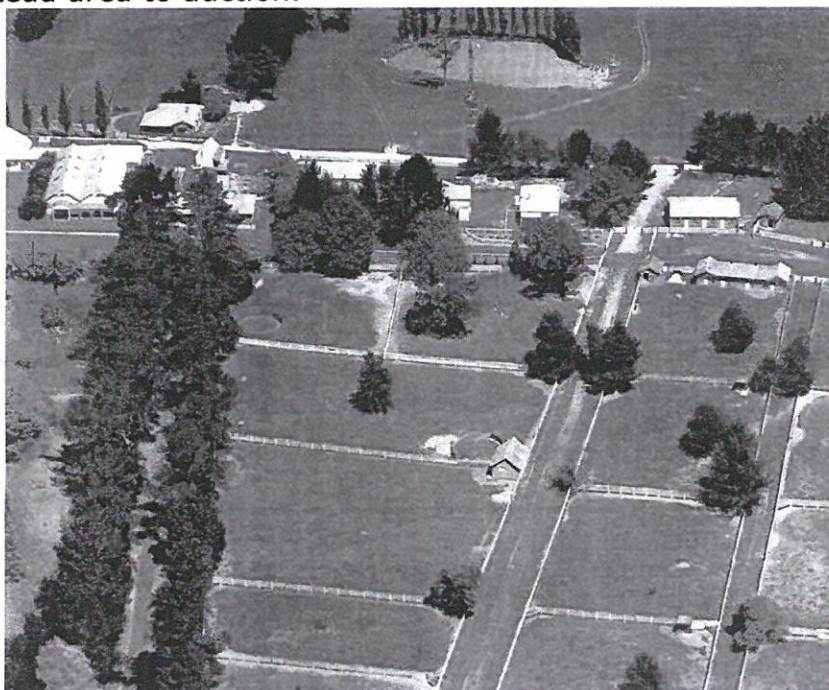




**Figure 52** A plan of the homestead area in the catalogue when it was put up for auction by King Ranch in 1963. The manager's residence is now used as an art gallery, the drive opposite staff cottages 2 and 3 is no longer in use and the form of the road is merging into the landscaped grounds. Several ponds, garden rooms, the swimming pool and pavilion, aviaries, garaging have subsequently been constructed and some minor ancillary structures lost.



**Figure 53** The manager's residence, c. 1963 when King Ranch put the homestead area to auction.



**Figure 54** An aerial view of the paddocks for thoroughbred horses c. 1963. The stabling could accommodate 25 horses in well ventilated individual hardwood dressed boxes. The coach house, was by that time, used as a garage, and could accommodate eight cars. In subsequent years the paddocks were reconfigured and a dam constructed in the left mid-ground.



The property did not initially sell, and in 1964 *Retford Park* was subdivided into two allotments by King Ranch Australia Pty Ltd. Lot 1 contained 1615 acre and lot 2, encompassing the house contained some 10 acres.<sup>61</sup> After the death of Sam, King Ranch had also acquired the adjoining *Milton Park*, also a Hordern property. *Milton Park* had been established by Anthony Hordern, Sir Samuel's bother who had married Mary Bullmore, sister of Gretel Packer.<sup>62</sup>

Alan Butcher started working for King Ranch for Peter Baillieu in 1977 when they still owned much of what later became re-incorporated into *Retford Park*. At that time the area where many of the farm buildings and horse yards are located were still part of King Ranch and remained so into the 1980s. From 1978 Alan was manager of both *Milton Park* and *Retford Park* for King Ranch which was based at *Milton Park*. It was a period in which the properties were being subdivided by King Ranch, a process that ended in the late 1980s, with Alan assisting in the management of the process. *Retford Park* was the focus of the horse stud, utilising the area adjacent to the farm buildings and running down to Old South Road, the area was dotted with stallion boxes, a barn, stables and cottages – some of which are no longer extant. 'Up the back' were the dairy herd near Cherry Tree Barn and the stud cattle were at *Milton Park*. King Ranch are noted for their introduction of Quarter horses and Santa Gertrudis cattle to Australia. The cattle at *Milton Park* were all studs and the bulls were distributed from *Milton Park* to the various stations in northern Australia owned by King Ranch. Near the dairy there was also a substantial piggery that no longer stands; all removed along with a number of internal yard fences by King Ranch after the Hordern proprietorship ceased. The interior of the purpose built Cherrytree Barn was removed to create a tractor shed by King Ranch c. early 1970s.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> LTO CT Vol. 9834 Fol 58.

<sup>62</sup> Mervyn Horton, 'Retford Park' in *Historic Houses of Australia*, Australian Council of National Trusts, North Melbourne, Cassell Australia, 1974, pp.274-279.

<sup>63</sup> Alan Butcher, Interview with Sue Rosen, 2011.

## 6 The James Fairfax Proprietorship, 1964

Lot 2 of the subdivision of *Retford Park* by King Ranch was purchased by James Oswald Fairfax, of the newspaper publishing family, in November 1964.<sup>64</sup> Fairfax recalled of the purchase in an interview in 2011, that he was talking to Peter Baillieu the Managing Director of King Ranch of Texas at a cocktail party and learnt that there had been little interest in the property when it was put up for auction. It suddenly occurred to James that *Retford Park* might be a suitable place for his mother to stay on her annual six month visits from England. He inspected the house with Terry Clune and Peter Baillieu on a wet, grey, windy day, the worst circumstances possible, approaching via the back drive, as the main drive had been disused and was overgrown. The house needed some work, but it was not rundown – although decorated as Sir Samuel and Lady Lotte had had it many years previously. The first impression was that the garden needed a lot of work – while the lawns had been mown and beds weeded, there were trees growing into each other. Terry, thought it was a marvellous property and played some part in influencing James' decision to buy it. He had not previously considered buying a country house, or given any consideration to the style of house that he might like.<sup>65</sup>

After some negotiation the house with 10 acres was purchased for £15,000 with an option to purchase another 10 acres. Shortly after taking possession, he brought interior designer, Leslie Walford, who he had known since the early 1950s, to the house and they went over it on several occasions. They felt that very little of the interior decoration was worth keeping. The exterior was a rather muddy yellow and the wrought iron was painted black, and the interiors were gloomy. It was as a house would have been in 1890 with very dark brown velvet curtains and bronze coloured chandeliers in the front rooms.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the purchase was greeted enthusiastically by the family.<sup>67</sup>

James described the property as he first saw it and his early work on it in his 1991 memoir:

... after forcing our way up a very overgrown drive which had not been used for a number of years, the back drive to the stable buildings having been thought the most convenient. Walking through the dark and gloomy rooms, denuded of furniture, I tried to remember what it had looked like when June [Hordern] had been chatelaine and to imagine how it could be given a new lease of life. I was

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<sup>64</sup> LTO CT Vol. 9834 Fol 59.

<sup>65</sup> James Fairfax, interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

<sup>66</sup> James Fairfax, interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

<sup>67</sup> James Fairfax, interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.



encouraged in this by Terry and by the time we had joined Edwina [nee Hordern] and Peter Baillieu at Milton Park, I had pretty well decided to make an offer. When my offer of £15,000 for the house and 10 acres with an option to buy another 10 in three years was accepted, I went into the usual 'What on earth have I taken on?' syndrome, but soon recovered as I got involved in the redecoration which was being done by Leslie Walford.

Some six months later, in the winter of 1964, I commissioned Donald Friend to paint a mural in the dining room ... he would come round to my Retford Hall flat, spread squares of masonite, on which were painted studies for the larger of the two murals, on the floor and proceed with much gesticulation and laughter to develop its theme, which was the four Elements. Fire has the city of Sydney spreading out between his legs, while Water encloses a dinner party in his arms with the identities of the guests indicated by their thought balloons. Above them are Air and Earth, the female figure, with a multitude of depictions and allusions - classical, mythological and contemporary - swirling about them.

The smaller mural over the fireplace contains some family history with Ginahgulla<sup>68</sup>, my beach house at Bilgola and Retford Park set on swags of turf supported by caryatids and centaurs. There are three Muse-like creatures with attributes altered from the classical tradition: prosperity has her arm around a printing press, Literature caresses a kangaroo while philosophy crowns my father with a laurel wreath. Nearby, Pan is piping to a Fauntleroy figure while a determined lady with a butterfly net is chasing a symbolic butterfly. These have been identified as young Warwick and Mary, but it was the artist's interpretation not mine.

Donald took two months to finish the murals, working in two-week stretches in a virtually unfinished house. ... The dining room ... is now a memorial to him ...<sup>69</sup>

James decided to commission Friend to paint the mural in the dining room because he was a very old friend. James had been the first visitor to stay at Donald's house in Bali; he never considered anyone else for the task. The concept for the long mural with the dinner party and thought balloons was developed entirely by Donald and run through with James at *Retford Hall*, with Donald explaining how he was going to use the four elements - earth, air, fire and water.

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<sup>68</sup> Ginahgulla was built by James Fairfax's great, great grandfather, John Fairfax, founder of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

<sup>69</sup> James Fairfax, *My Regards to Broadway: A Memoir*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1991, pp.310-312.

However, for the mural over the fire place James told Donald what he wanted represented, including the original Herald building, John Fairfax, *Ginahgulla*, James' great aunt Mary's house, and his house at Bilgola – the mural was entirely James' concept, representing the key places in his life.<sup>70</sup>

Donald Friend's diary gives some sense of the thought, feeling and spirit that went into the mural and also the mood of the house in these very early months. He wrote in his diary entry for 19 July 1964 of his visit to Mittagong to have a look at *Retford Park* with James with a view to doing a mural in the dining room, he wrote 'This is a most important commission to me in a dozen ways. In the first place I want to have a major work on a wall in Australia. Also I like James, and he is a serious patron of painting'.<sup>71</sup> Friend continues,

By the look of things at Retford Park ... the garden kept trim, though it's been empty for months, and the outside painting now finished in a bold reddish-pink, which surprisingly looks very well – a piece of Leslie's 'taste' no doubt – I'll be able to start painting on the walls. I've been working for quite a while on and off on figure drawings and small tempered panels of details for it, to get together a whole bag of ideas I can incorporate in the big work. Very odd ideas they are, too.

... My idea is to make another very serious attempt on a big 'metamorphic' picture. In some ways it will be a sequel to the *Apocalypse* one I painted years ago at Hill End, that Coventry has.

A 'Cosmic' subject – the Four Elements. These (as in that other one) will be symbolised as four huge nude figures lying across the whole wall, forming the basic big shapes of the design. They will form the contours of the sea, land and sky, and will be as it were made up of – or *tattooed* with numerous figure groups landscapes and cityscapes of Australia, of fantastic (Hieronymous Bosch-like) creatures, trees, houses. There will be a city (Sydney) painted from *inside* the walls of its beehive-cell-rooms. There will be angels and comets and aeroplanes, ships, animals.<sup>72</sup>

On August 19, Friend wrote,

Bill and Lynne drove me up to Bowral to Retford Park to begin the mural. They stayed the night before returning to Sydney, and thank God they did, for that great draughty,

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<sup>70</sup> James Fairfax, Interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.574.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.574.



cold echoing empty monster of a house needed company to break in its creaking solitudes. We made up a fire of pine cones and logs, that Bill gathered, in the dining room where the mural was to be painted, and made ourselves cheerful. I started to paint immediately. Next day, when they left, it was snowing. I worked all day and everyday like a maniac. It wasn't so bad when one got used to it as during the day painters and carpenters were about, and after they left in the evening I made myself a pleasant solitary routine of bath (hot water was fortunately on), drink and dinner. I had a bed to sleep on, and a chair. And a work table. And the painting went quickly ahead – more quickly than ever I could have hoped so that almost a third of it was when they came back again to pick me up.

So now I am at their house in Sydney, and once more at work on detail panels in preparation for the next bout on the walls, when I go back there in a week.<sup>73</sup>

The diary continues from *Retford Park* on 7 September,

So – back to the mural in the haunted grange.

I drove up with James Fairfax and a friend of his<sup>74</sup>, bringing with us, in addition to other supplies, luncheon for Leslie Walford, Dickie Keep and some others, who arrived on Sunday...

'The mural is *magic*. But sheer magic!' they cried. 'Have you put *me* in? – Of course he has he has, ... You're the one next to ...' 'That? ... me?'

'So that's the table you work on', said Leslie. 'But it's from my mother's house. How did it get here?'

'It's one of the things she sent over when I first came. Remember? - you gave her a list of necessities to be sent here?'

'Of course. And that's the dog-mating table.'

'The *what*? Asked James.

'The dog-mating table. She mates her dachshunds on it.'

'... Do you mean she watches them?'

'Someone has to. They're valuable pedigreed dogs, and need "adjusting".'

So now they've all gone and I'm alone with the great

<sup>73</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.575.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Walker.

work.<sup>75</sup>

Several days later, Friend mused

Perhaps it will be finished in another week or two weeks. So much is done, and it's so near completion now that I don't know if it's brilliant or bloody awful. This is such an intense and introverted way of living in this huge empty mansion with its banging doors and echoing rooms. I seem almost imprisoned in this room with the painting, the wireless I brought up this time for the companionship of its music, and the fire I keep going day and night, and a jam tin packed with flowers from the garden – daffodils and jonquils and grape hyacinth, and white and rosy camellias.

It's pretty odd to find oneself a fairly celebrated artist at the age of *near* 50, at work at last on the only painting that could be called an important big work in the only country (one can't count poor naïve innocent Ceylon!) where I have any celebrity now.

After all these years!-

And perhaps, if this picture is ever presented to the view of our critics and a few of the crackpot gaggle of nincompoops '*the people in the know*' I shall again be regarded as a promising artist.<sup>76</sup>

The following year, in March he had a more relaxed time,

James drove me up to Retford Park for the weekend: a small and very pleasant casual house party: I added a couple of figures to the mural – of his sister Caroline and her husband, and that was all the work I did – we lazed about the garden and whiled away the brief days.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.576.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.576.

<sup>77</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.587.





**Figure 55** Donald Friend at work on the mural in 1964.

Like Samuel Horden, 100 years before him, James brought funds earned in city based business enterprises that had been developed by a long established NSW colonial family. In an odd symmetry Fairfax's city residence was a flat in a subdivided *Retford Hall* at Darling Point, but he had never previously visited *Retford Park* prior to his trip with Terry Clune.<sup>78</sup> James recalled in 2011 that he did not have a philosophy as such in his approach to the house other than that the first thing necessary was to decorate the house completely and then to furnish it and to start thinking about the possibilities with the garden, including the extra 10 acres on the left coming up the drive from Old South Road. It was some years before he started acquiring more land, buying eventually another 400 acres from West Kimberley Cattle owned by Peter and Edwina Baillieu, extending toward *Milton Park* bringing to a total of some 420 acres, purchased to ensure that the privacy of the property was protected.

Work on the house began fairly quickly, after purchase in December 1963, and James, usually with Richard Walker, began to stay overnight in 1964, saying for a night or two every second or third weekend, sleeping in sleeping bags in the largely empty house. Although Leslie initially lent some furniture from his mother's house at Burradoo conditions were quite primitive with Donald occupying the only furnished room.

### **6.1 Leslie Walford on the Design Philosophy and Approach**

In an interview (largely paraphrased below) in 2011 Leslie Walford recalled his association with James and his role at *Retford Park*. Leslie had arrived back in Australia in 1956 after having grown up in England from the age of 11, and having undertaken a design studies in Paris between 1953 and 1956. He gradually began to make friends and James became part of his circle of friends and when Leslie opened his shop, Invoice No.1 was to James for a sofa table. Not long after James purchased *Retford Hall* and the very first piece of furniture that Leslie made as a designer was a four poster bed with fluted columns that he designed for the flat. James had developed an interest in art, buying his first painting, an Eric Wilson in 1944, and continued spasmodically after his time at Oxford.<sup>79</sup>

Leslie recalled flying up to Mittagong with James to inspect the house and his first impressions of it: 'the garden was choking the house, coming right up against it, it was rather dark and heavy and the house was a sort of cow-pat colour, a very unappealing colour'. It had thick walls and narrow long slit windows and a tower, 'a rectangular piece of work with lots of frilly balconies, cast-iron lace and a pretty portecochere. It has some delicate prettiness added to the strength of the architecture ... it was a wonderful looking house'. It sat like a

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<sup>78</sup> James Fairfax, interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011; James Fairfax, pers. comm. August 2011.



'monument in the landscape, chocked by the garden, but quite a grand looking house and very tall ceilings and big rooms and the inside was almost the same sort of colours as the outside ... dreadful, drab, absolutely unappealing...'. Noting the dreariness of the house, Leslie felt that James as a young man, should live in '... a young man's house, and [that it] be attractive for him, not seeking to be grand, but seeking to be happy and to open it up.' James agreed.<sup>80</sup>

With regard to the exterior of the house, Leslie was inspired by the idea of making the house like 'a wonderful villa' and suggested painting it Portuguese pink with white lace work. Looking back from 2011 Leslie thought he must have had some images of the south of France, Spain and Portugal in mind, as at that time, he did not know of any other house that was 'that strong, shrimpy Portuguese pink'. It remains the same colour chosen in 1964, although it has been repainted several times. In his opinion, the maintenance at *Retford Park* has been exceptional, more so than any house he could think of, any maintenance required being always done as a matter of course, rather than waiting for signs of deterioration, like chipped paint, to be evident. There is constant maintenance. Later an enclosure designed by Guilford Bell was added at the rear for the pet emus and birds. Bell also designed the swimming pool and the pavilion. In Leslie's opinion, James was always very definite about the decisions he made with regard to the property. Gradually the staff quarters at the rear were subtly extended and made more comfortable. There were initially no real garages for the cars. A cottage near the house was made with James's leadership into an art gallery with a nice place to sit outside and enabled James to hang quite a lot of the pictures that he constantly would collect.<sup>81</sup>

The interior of the house had 'everything you could want', but at the time of its purchase James did not possess any particular furniture for it nor 'too many pictures', so the process of decoration was started 'almost from scratch'. The guiding principle was never to do anything that would harm the late Victorian character of the house, '... the late Victorian Italianate mansion that it was, with its thick walls, that must have defended people against the cold of Bowral or the heat of the day, while they were wearing thick dark dresses and looking out through the narrow windows, not much of a desire for sunlight and openness, but we had to make the house seem more friendly'.<sup>82</sup>

The porte-cochere was a very nice thing on arriving at the house, both pretty and dramatic. You crunch up the gravel drive, sweep around beautiful trees and you're underneath 'all this mad lace-work' at the bottom of the steps leading to a rather grand front door. You enter the house into a large hall-room, like a drawing room, the ceilings are

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<sup>80</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.



very tall. The main rooms of the downstairs were painted a near white colour and had polished floors, we were getting rid of the cow-patty colour. The fire places were improved over the years, James found a lovely marble fireplace in Ireland, designed in the 1760s by Italian Bossi that he put in the hall-room and a marvellous rug from the women's prison in Portugal was found, a simple geometric design. Gradually the room was furnished with different bits of Georgian furniture, rather grand wing chairs, a very big sofa, interesting grand looking standard lamps, various strong English pieces for drinks trays, a beautiful desk. There was the addition of a Mortlake tapestry, paintings, always a wonderful painting over the fireplace and rich curtains in a quite material. It became a lovely room to enter, especially when there were flowers, people would have drinks in that room. In the first few years, sometimes on a Sunday night a screen would be brought in and we would watch a movie. It was a nice hall, but looked more like a big sitting room.<sup>83</sup>

All the doors of the house were thick and solid and beautifully made, so all we had to do was paint. The architecture was so well put together from the 1880s, it was magnificent wood work. Strong good door knobs and scutcheon plates were acquired to make each door very nice. For the sitting room James purchased a magnificent pine late seventeenth century mantelpiece and it had as an over-mantle as well. Leslie manufactured a pine bookcase for the room that was eventually replaced by a very rare eighteenth century Chippendale period bookcase. In that room, inspired by places like Italy, Leslie used an Antigo vinyl tile, which is six sided and looked like old terracotta which was imported from the United States. The dark red was very successful against the white walls. Using a 'pattern of a huge oversized damask ... printed on white linen in near black', very dramatic curtains were made. Simple white blinds were used on the windows, lots of comfortable furniture was found for that room, sofas and chairs were made, unusual pieces were sought out by both Leslie and James.

There was another very large room downstairs which for many years held a large billiard table that was rarely used, in 2005 the room was redecorated, the billiard table disposed of and a large television was installed in a cabinet designed by Leslie. The sofas and chairs were in an off white thick damask, and there were tall wing chairs, creating a very comfortable television room. On the ground floor there was an old fashioned Edwardian bathroom and a small spare. There was also a breakfast room that was conservatory like with a tongue-in-groove wooden ceiling, stripes of wood that they painted in yellow and white alternatively. There were windows onto the back courtyard furnished with early nineteenth century French Provincial table and chairs. Most meals except dinner are served in that room, unless there is a large lunch party - it's a cosy nice room.

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<sup>83</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.



The dining room was given a lot of attention, eventually another dining table was acquired and eighteenth century English chairs were purchased from the Spanish Ambassador in Canberra. They were later recovered in different coloured silks by Leslie. The room is dedicated to Donald Friend - with a mural covering one wall featuring the elements - earth, air, fire and water - represented by enormous youths floating in the background with lots of events depicting our friends, some 30 or 40 are recognizable. Another mural over the fireplace was concerned with James's personal history. The room was coloured to suit the mural - its an extravagant experience to have a meal in that room.

The balconies surrounded the house and the front balcony was often used to sit out on. The rest of the ground floor is made up of staff quarters, dining and sitting rooms, kitchens and pantries. There are both a front and back staircase. Upstairs there are bedrooms, bathrooms and a box room for the staff.

Ascending the main staircase, you come to the main bedrooms - there are five. The master bedroom has an ensuite bathroom and a small study. A main guest room which is a double room of a 'great' proportion and size, two other rooms which accommodate double beds and a single room, which was once used as a library room. The bathrooms while old fashioned - are very comfortable, subtly modernised so they have all the comfort without showing it. The rooms were so large and so separate from each other, there was no need to maintain a uniformity of colour to create a sense of continuity and space, Leslie thought that there was the opportunity to add interest, by having each room a different colour, choosing for each room a marvellous coloured carpet - we chose blue, red, gold, green - with the hallway super emerald green. They have been kept in that form from 1965 and each room was given a colour scheme according to the carpet, so each room held its own, with its own colour. We kept the existing light fittings. The green room had subtly off white walls with a tinge of green and a magnificent patterned chintz, with an enormous pattern over two meters of spring flowers used for both curtains and bedspreads. There was a sofa and a dressing table, stools, luggage racks and bedside tables, bedside lights - all that was needed to make a room comfortable. Each room was furnished differently and with antiques. James' room was furnished with a magnificent four poster opium bed which sits in the middle of the room and good Chinese furniture in the Ming tradition and Chinese wall paper on the walls. All the characteristics of the rooms have been carefully maintained across the years. There are always a great many books and magazines in the house and in every room the comfort of guests has been thought of. The comfort of the house increased over the years as James settled into the house. It's a delight to stay there.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.



There is also a tower room equipped with a cane day bed and desk and chair, but it is not used much.

When James took over the house, the floors and building structure were in good order and no heavy work, wall rebuilding or sanding needed to be undertaken. The only construction involved cupboards. There was no rush with the work, it went on at a steady pace and it was furnished at that time was well, with bits changing gradually over the years as special pieces were purchased.<sup>85</sup> In terms of input into the design a meeting would be held to decide particular issues or rooms and he would listen to suggestions, consider them and agree 90-95% of the time. Leslie's approach to working with a client is to be in-tune with them, to like them, be sympathetic to their aims and for them to like him and to be sympathetic to his aims. They must be on the same wavelength. If I understand the job and the client I have a good intuition as to what will be the best solution for the project. At the end of the day my inspiration and knowledge together with his need and his preferences go together. James liked the idea of a house that had interest and colour, he liked furniture and pictures, and his persona was more Anglicised than Australian, his father was an anglicised sort of man and James had just returned from living England. He wasn't into the beach and football, he was more contemplative and attracted by book learning, he was historically aware and very Europeanised and so was Leslie. All the work, in the design, the measurements and instructions for making of furnishing, were all personally done by Leslie.<sup>86</sup>

In 2005 the curtains were changed and the walls in the blue room were re-upholstered.

Leslie Walford, believes the house reflects James's personality in that 'James has a gentlemanly formality and a well behaved feeling and I think the house has a gentlemanly formality. James has an orderliness in his lifestyle and the house has that. There is no disorder. There is no untidy room. There is nothing not attended to. He expects everything to be exact and he quietly sees that it is and his staff always make sure that it is. So I think that reflects him. His intellect is considerable, absolutely considerable ... and you can see that in the choice of furniture and pictures. You can tell that it has been put together by someone with a lot of brain. And that probably goes for the books and the wine. Its not a house that's children friendly nor is it casual.' The house 'has continuous beauty' and also it has that Japanese quality where not everything is noticeable at once, you have to turn a corner to get a different view there are plenty of layers, its not a simple house. Also James expected that you would have all the things you needed near you, a very English trait related to comfort.

Leslie Walford's plans for the interior were a collaboration, he knew

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<sup>85</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen 22 June 2011.



James' tastes and preferences, with Leslie having designed James' *Retford Hall* flat. The house was redecorated by James and Leslie c. 2007.

In terms of the design projects of Walford's career, he ranked his work at *Retford Park* as one of his best and certainly the most enjoyable.



**Figure 56** Repainting the house, 1994, a massive job now undertaken in stages.





**Figure 57** The aviary adjoining the rear of the house.

## **6.2 James Fairfax and the Evolving Landscape**

On taking over the property James knew 'nothing about cattle' and in contrast to the Horderns, his intent was to use the property as a country house/retreat, for use on weekends, while living in the city during the working week. This he did until the end of 1987, when after the takeover of the Fairfax newspaper business by Warwick Fairfax, James became freer to pursue other interests, and he began to think more of *Retford Park* as home base, which it eventually became in early 1995.

In terms of the landscape, in the parkland on either side James removed trees and on the south side particularly there were 'far too many conifers', making the area very dark. In 1967, James' mother, met English landscape architect, John Codrington, through an old friend, Walter Pye (the man who later gave, the house, *Lindesay* to the Women's Committee of the National Trust). James had known Walter in England and with Sue Du Val, James had found a house, *Werrington*, for Walter at Burradoo. Codrington was coming to Australia to advise the botanical gardens in Perth, and James' mother gave the services of Codrington to redo *Retford Park* as a birthday present. Codrington undertook some redesign of the garden, replacing the flower gardens with a park like setting of trees and shrubs. A memoranda from Codrington dated March 1967 details his plan for the



garden [Appendix A], which James adopted in part. The discrepancies between Codrington's proposal and what eventuated reflect James Fairfax's input to the design. When James took over the property, in the front garden toward the fountain there were two camellias and cypresses, a cotoneaster arch and a mixed bed of azaleas, bits and pieces – there had been no attempt to plan in terms of colour, there were pinks and reds. The bowls of the fountain had come from Sam Hordern's property at *Yulgilbar* on the Clarence River.<sup>87</sup>

Codrington's proposal was in the style of Humphrey Repton, the eighteenth century English landscape designer, the Camelias were to be replaced by *Cupressus sempervirens*, and instead of the reds and pinks, cool colours - blue, white, and grey, using lavender, white agapanthus and grey foliage plants were deployed. At the back of the house, viewed from the breakfast room various tubs were used to tidy up, but James felt the 'mass of pale primrose yellow and sulphur coloured shrubs and plants' was 'too much' and eventually Guilford Bell designed a birdcage for the area. In 1990 these included King parrots, Cloncurries, Princess and Superb parrots, Twenty-eights, Alexandrines and Ringnecks from India and Golden, Silver and Lady Amherst pheasants. On the right hand side of the drive, Codrington suggested shrub roses, he was used to English gardens, and the shrub roses did not do well being too close to large trees there, including a sequoia and James later, when he had more confidence in his own design ideas, had them moved to beyond the laurel hedge. In terms of the finished design, it was entirely James' decision, after considering the recommendations of Codrington. The final design for the swimming pool area particularly diverged from Codrington's proposal as James had decided that he wanted Guilford Bell to design a pool. Codrington liked the idea of finely mowed alleys going toward the trees, whereas James preferred to let it remain natural. He also felt the garden needed more colour and planted a number of deciduous trees, including the maple at the foot of the drive and a tricolour beech, a dogwood and a yellow tulip. Quite a lot of the design is in fact attributable to James with Codrington's input. He ascribes as an influence his Fairfax grandmother, who created a garden at *Sospel* in Fitzroy Street in Leura. The garden became a place in which he walks on a daily basis and an important part of his life at *Retford Park*.<sup>88</sup>

On a return visit in January 1968, Donald Friend noted the effect of these changes in the garden,

... the impenetrably dark, glossy (and huge) camellias that erstwhile crowded thickly up to the verandahs and *porte cochere* are gone, leaving the eye free to wander out from the house and through the slopes of lawns, groves of great trees, to find that hedges and fences have also been swept

<sup>87</sup> James Fairfax, Interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.

<sup>88</sup> James Fairfax, Interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011; Bowral & District, Australian Decorative & Fine Arts Society, Memo re: *Retford Park* visit.



away to disclose further glades and swards.. it has been transformed from a rather gloomy garden into parkland that concentrates itself into a very pleasant, not-too-formal garden about the house.<sup>89</sup>

On a weekend in 1981,

The garden was in full splendour of rhododendrons and azaleas – irises in bud, aviaries in full squawk of rare parrots, fabled pheasants and several emus which somehow contrived to look soignée and antediluvian at the same time.

The garden at Retford Park is formal, and James' additions and improvement have now come to maturity framed by the huge old trees planted about a hundred years ago. I made a drawing – a portrait-drawing of him in a Confederate soldier's cap which I greatly coveted.<sup>90</sup>

The tennis court and horse paddock retained their original laurel hedges and in the 1970s, a swimming pool and pavilion designed by Guilford Bell was constructed in the horse paddock. Bell was one of James' oldest friends. A square pavilion was constructed at one end and sculptures by David Wilson and Clement Meadmore, purchased in Sydney galleries were placed at the other.<sup>91</sup> Inga King's the Euphoric Angels and the 'Heights of the Yangtze' by Janet King (no relation to Inga) were also purchased, none were commissioned.

In the late 1970s when Alan Butcher came to *Retford Park*, the formal garden stopped quite near the main house on the eastern side between it and the swimming pool. There were lots of pheasants and birds in old cages plus a tennis court in the area, they were eventually removed and the area was landscaped to its current form by Sydney based landscape architect, David Wilkinson using hedges and lawns.<sup>92</sup>

Leslie Walford commented in 2011, that 'the garden is absolutely beautiful, and there are some magnificent trees around the house and I think the garden is full of magic, and so does James. He is very aware of that garden, very appreciative. He thought about the garden a great deal and took the most sincere interest always in every part of it ... think[ing] out how to improve it, and over the years confused areas have been made simpler...'.<sup>93</sup>

James stated in 2011 that the farm buildings have been maintained because of their historic value, but the stables for example which are

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 4, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.78.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 4, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.514.

<sup>91</sup> Jane Cavanough, Anthea prell and Tim North, *Gardens of the Southern Highlands New South Wales, 1828-1988*, The Australian Garden Journal, 1988, p.53

<sup>92</sup> Alan Butcher, Interview with Sue Rosen, 28 April 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Leslie Walford, Interview with Sue Rosen, 22 June 2011.



not used are more of an 'expensive nuisance' although they are picturesque and show the former use of the property. On the other hand, one cottage used by the younger Horderns, Same and June, (pre 1940s) has been converted into a gallery and another five former staff cottages are rented out.<sup>94</sup>



**Figure 58** The front garden in 1974.

<sup>94</sup> James Fairfax, Interview with Sue Rosen, 27 April 2011.



**Figure 59** A 1988 view of the front garden.



**Figure 60** A 2001 view of drive and its setting as it leaves the house.





**Figure 61** View across front lawn to house, 2001.





**Figure 62** The garden beside the gallery in 1993 with house in the background and one of James' Rhodesian Ridgebacks, who are also a feature of the property.



**Figure 63** Tree felling , 1989.





**Figure 64** Jan King with sculpture in the garden, 1985.



**Figure 65** Jan King and family with James Fairfax and her sculpture in the garden in 1999.





**Figure 66** The canal with the black faced Suffolk sheep in the background, 1999.



**Figure 67** A 2001 view of the canal.





**Figure 68** The view across the canal in 2001.



**Figure 69** The red bauxite driveway as it runs beside the canal, 1999.





**Figure 70** View from swimming pool and pond enclosure. 2001.



**Figure 71** James Fairfax and Morson Clift in the freshly relocated rose garden, 1996.





**Figure 72** The rose garden, 2000.



**Figure 73** The green room designed by David Wilkinson, with Inga King sculpture.





**Figure 74** Site of the knot garden, 1989. Emu run at the rear.



**Figure 75** Planting of the knot garden in 1992, designed by David Wilkinson and planted with English and Japanese Box and Mophead Robinias.





**Figure 76** The knot garden, 1995.



**Figure 77** The knot garden, 2001.





**Figure 78** The donkeys occupy a yard adjacent to the pool area.



**Figure 79** Emu and chick in their run.





**Figure 80** Retford Park 1983



**Figure 81** Retford Park 1995.





**Figure 82** Retford Park, 1983.



**Figure 83** Retford Park 1993.



### **6.3 James Gleeson on the art collection at Retford Park in the 1960s**

In the mid 1960s James's art collection caught the eye of art historian artist and critic James Gleeson, who described James as 'a born collector ... more than adequately endowed with those prerequisites of art collecting - taste and wealth'.<sup>95</sup> The collection at *Retford Park* contained 'exceptional examples of antique furniture, glass, silver, porcelain, Thai and pre-Columbian sculpture, bronze busts by Rodin and Epstein and, most importantly, a superb collection of contemporary Australian paintings', with each 'an important example of the artist's oeuvre' and included works by William Dobell, Francis Lyburner, Godfrey Miller, Rouault, Hardy Wilson, Rupert Bunny, Brett Whiteley, Charles Blackman, Russell Drysdale, Ian Fairweather, Robert Dickerson, Donald Friend, and John Passmore.<sup>96</sup> While the collection covered a broad segment of Australian art it was a collection that reflected the personal taste of the collector, and at that time focussed on Australian art. Gleeson commented that each painting had been 'fitted into a sympathetic context as though the rooms had been designed around them... collected for their own sake' and 'placed in a setting that allows each of them to make its maximum effect while yet playing an effective part in the overall harmony of the room'.<sup>97</sup> The collection concentrated on painters that had emerged and matured post WWII. Gleeson concluded, 'it has few equals and no superiors'.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> James Gleeson, 'The Art Collectors 3 - James O. Fairfax', *Art and Australia*, Vol.3 No.3 December 1965, pp.174, 181.

<sup>96</sup> James Gleeson, 'The Art Collectors 3 - James O. Fairfax', *Art and Australia*, Vol.3 No.3 December 1965, p.174.

<sup>97</sup> James Gleeson, 'The Art Collectors 3 - James O. Fairfax', *Art and Australia*, Vol.3 No.3 December 1965, p.184.

<sup>98</sup> James Gleeson, 'The Art Collectors 3 - James O. Fairfax', *Art and Australia*, Vol.3 No.3 December 1965, pp.187.





**Figure 84** The hall/drawing room as photographed by Max Dupain for *Art and Australia* in 1965, shortly after redecoration. [The Sam Ure-Smith Collection, in Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection, NSW Historic Houses Trust]



**Figure 85** The sitting room as photographed by Max Dupain for *Art and Australia* in 1965, shortly after redecoration. [The Sam Ure-Smith Collection, in Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection, NSW Historic Houses Trust]





**Figure 86** The dining room with the Donald Friend murals as photographed by Max Dupain for *Art and Australia* in 1965, shortly after redecoration. [The Sam Ure-Smith Collection, in Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection, NSW Historic Houses Trust]

#### **6.4 Retford Park – the ‘life’ of the house**

Initially James largely used the house on weekends and to entertain friends and business associates, it eventually becoming his home and primary residence in the mid 1990s. Of those early years, Donald Friend describes a weekend house party in November 1972, including Mervyn Horton of *Art and Australia*, where he hoped to gain support for a book on his work,

Retford is idyllic. Sad we have to return to town this morning. It was a harmonious small house party – James: Terry Clune and Herbert Field; Billy McCann, Mervyn Horton, Attilio, Madja and myself. We lolled about, strolled green rolling lawns – azaleas and rhododendrons were still out, and the last of the iris. Swathes of roses. James showed ancient films – Laurel and



Hardy comedies- at night. We all did absolutely nothing but eat, drink, talk and relax.<sup>99</sup>

On another weekend in 1975, Friend wrote

At first light the magpies are carolling. My window looks down into the rose garden: beyond magnolias, cedars, the oaks and lindens of the park. The lawns are cut smooth. When the air stirs, scents of pines, of roses, lavender, alternate.

Billy McCann after breakfast, scans the scene with genial reproof.' Australia begins beyond the ha-ha' he says, snubbing the noble imported flora of the garden. But his morning is made when a flight of grey galahs descend on the green green grass'.<sup>100</sup>



**Figure 87** Playing croquet on the front lawn.

<sup>99</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 4, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.271.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 4, National Library of Australia, 2005, p.364.



James also opened the house to raise funds for various charities, particularly the Children's Medical Research Foundation which he established with Sir Lorimer Dods. Other groups welcomed to the house included various societies interested in art and gardens. The house has been on the official itinerary of study groups from the Australian Decorative & Fine Arts Society (1990) with funds raised donated to the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery as a contribution to alleviate the damage sustained in the 1989 earthquake; New York's Museum of Modern Art (1992) and from the Guggenheim (1996), Charles Saumarez Smith, head of Britain's National Portrait Gallery visited in 1999 and in 2000 its director Sir Roy Strong also visited. In 1978 when the Commonwealth heads of Government meeting was disrupted with bomb blasts outside Sydney's Hilton Hotel, Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser asked James if he would provide an alternative venue and host the official dinner for the heads of government at *Retford Park*, which offered what was seen as a safe environment, away from the disruption caused by the security scare in Sydney. The extended Fairfax family, including Caroline and Phillip Simpson, and Elizabeth Fairfax as well as Baillieus of *Milton Park* were called on to assist. On another occasion in 1981, Donald Friend recalled

On Sunday before lunch James, Billy and I went for drinks at *Milton*. The Baillieus, who own it (another grand place with a marvellous garden) had telephoned James to 'help out' because the Frasers were to arrive, and Malcom Fraser is said to be difficult, cold, untalkative and forbidding. However, with his (I thought) delightful wife Tamie, he was in a very relaxed and amiable mood.<sup>101</sup>

The archives at *Retford Park* reveal that other well known visitors have included in the 1970s Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowden of Great Britain, Princess Margaret of Hesse and the Rhine, Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Sidney and Cynthia Nolan. State and National Governors and current and former prime ministers have been guests at the house. Among the many visiting artists whose works hang in the house are Jeffrey Smart, James Gleeson and Justin O'Brien. At the local community level the grounds and/or house has been opened for the Tulip festival, for visits by the National Trust, as part of the Open Garden Scheme.

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<sup>101</sup> Paul Hetherington (ed.) *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, Vol. 4, National Library of Australia, 2005, pp. 514-515.





**Figure 88** Prime Minister Malcom Fraser and his wife Tamie, Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony, being greeted by James Fairfax and Betty Fairfax for the CHOGM dinner, 16 February 1978.





ABOVE. Mr. Barry Stern, Mrs. John Lawson, Mr. Jerry Vanbeek, and Mr. Lawson (left to right) had a basket luncheon on the lawn opposite the entrance to Retford Hall. Despite the drought, the shrubs and trees in the lovely garden were in full bloom.



AT RIGHT. Host Mr. James Fairfax (centre) and Mrs. Ignacy Listwan, president of the Cornucopia Committee, which arranged the day at Eborac, chatted outside the house with Sir Lorimer Dods, the honorary director of the Children's Medical Research Foundation.

## A DAY AT RETFORD PARK

● Retford Park, former home of the Hordern family, now owned by Mr. James Fairfax, was opened for a private inspection to aid the Children's Medical Research Foundation.



VIBRANT Chinese scrolls on the walls of the main bedroom, which has a Chinese screen, formed a background for Mrs. Peter Bailieu, of "Milton Park," Bourke, and Mr. Dick Keep. The other four spacious bedrooms upstairs are beautifully furnished in shades of powder-blue, crimson, old gold, and olive-green.



THREESOME. Mr. and Mrs. Neville Larsson and Mrs. John Excell (centre) found a sulkie on the dock lawn a convenient resting place while they waited to hear the talk given by Mr. Leslie Walford on the interior of the house, which he designed.



ABOVE. A delicate antique plate was admired by Mr. and Mrs. Bayne Geikie in the sitting-room, which has a Dreyfus painting set in an intricately carved natural wood mantelpiece. A wonderful collection of Australian contemporary art scattered throughout many rooms of the house.



AT LEFT. An exciting Dona Friend mural which covers a whole wall of the dining-room was one of the main talking points during the inspection. Committee members Mrs. Hertzberg, her daughter, Clio, and Mrs. Marjorie Armstrong (left to right) were photographed in front of the mural.

THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY - October 27, 1965

Page

**Figure 89** The Australian Women's Weekly in October 1965 featured a fund raiser house inspection for the Children's Medical Research Foundation not long after the refurbishing of the house was completed. [Trove]





**Figure 90** Governor of NSW and VC recipient Sir Roden Cutler and his wife visiting Retford Park for lunch in 1979.



**Figure 91** Art Gallery Society luncheon in the Donald Friend room, 1987.





**Figure 92** Jeffrey Smart visiting in 1999.



**Figure 93** The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, woodwind players performing in the gardens 1999.





**Figure 94** Sir Roy Strong, Director of the British National Portrait gallery lunching in the Donald Friend Room, 2000. Far left and far right Philip and Caroline Simpson.

### **6.5 Fairfax Amalgamation and Subdivision History**

In 1967 Lot 1 created by King Ranch Australia in 1964 was further subdivided into two allotments, consisting of Lot 3 containing some 9 acres and Lot 4 containing some 1606 acres. Lot 3 which adjoined Lot 2 was purchased by James Fairfax in December 1968 and Lot 4 was transferred to West Kimberley Cattle Limited in 1978.<sup>102</sup> In 1981 these lots were reconfigured in a new subdivision which resulted in the former Lot 2 on which the *Retford Park* house was situated expanded to some 48 hectares with the new lot named Lot 6, with James Fairfax, the proprietor. A new Lot 5 containing 610 hectares comprised the residue. The new proprietor was Retford Park Estate Pty Ltd, a private company, 17% of which was owned by James Fairfax, 5% by Peter Bray and the balance by West Kimberley Cattle Company.<sup>103</sup> The new arrangement is indicated in DP 60833.

<sup>102</sup> LTO CT Vol. 10675 Fol 149 and Fol 150.

<sup>103</sup> LTO CT Vol. 14312 Fol 213 and Fol 214.

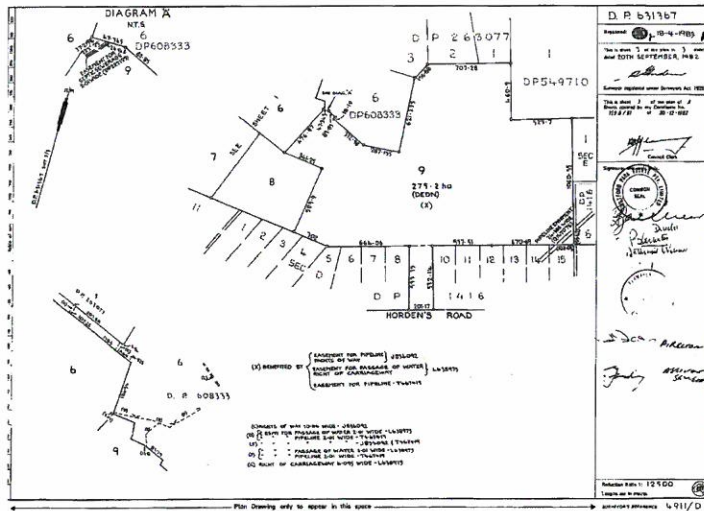
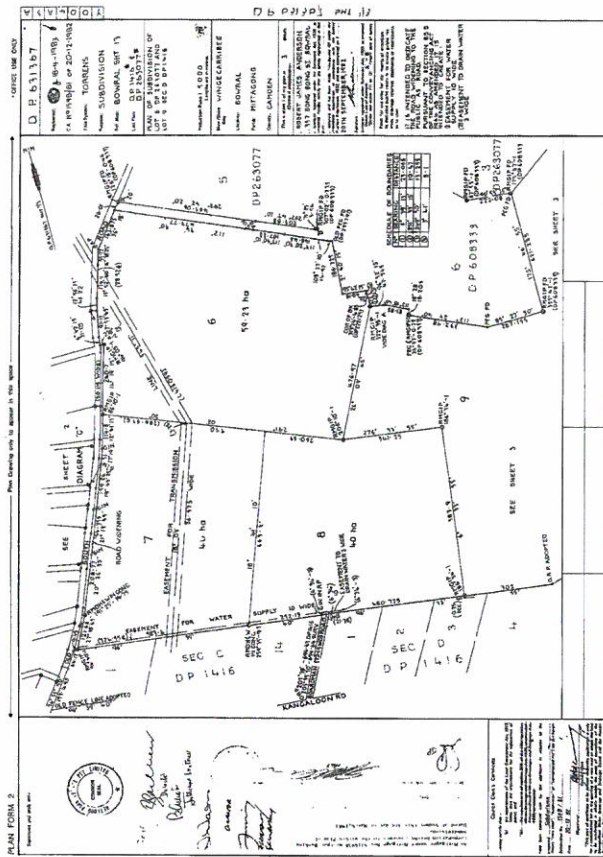








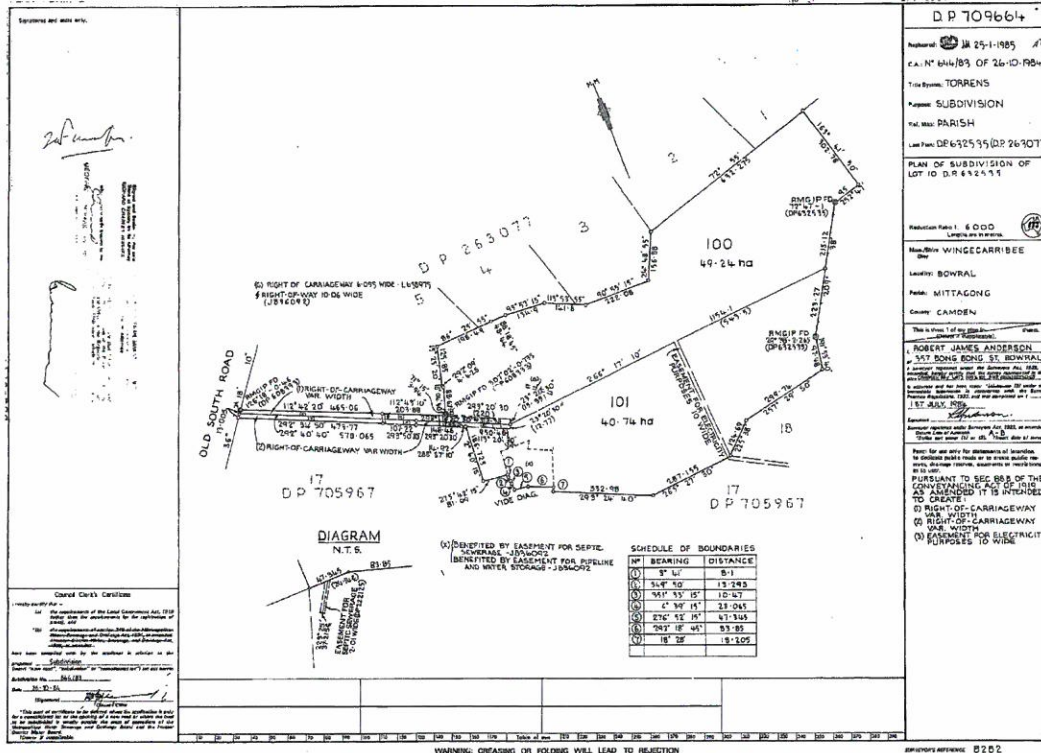




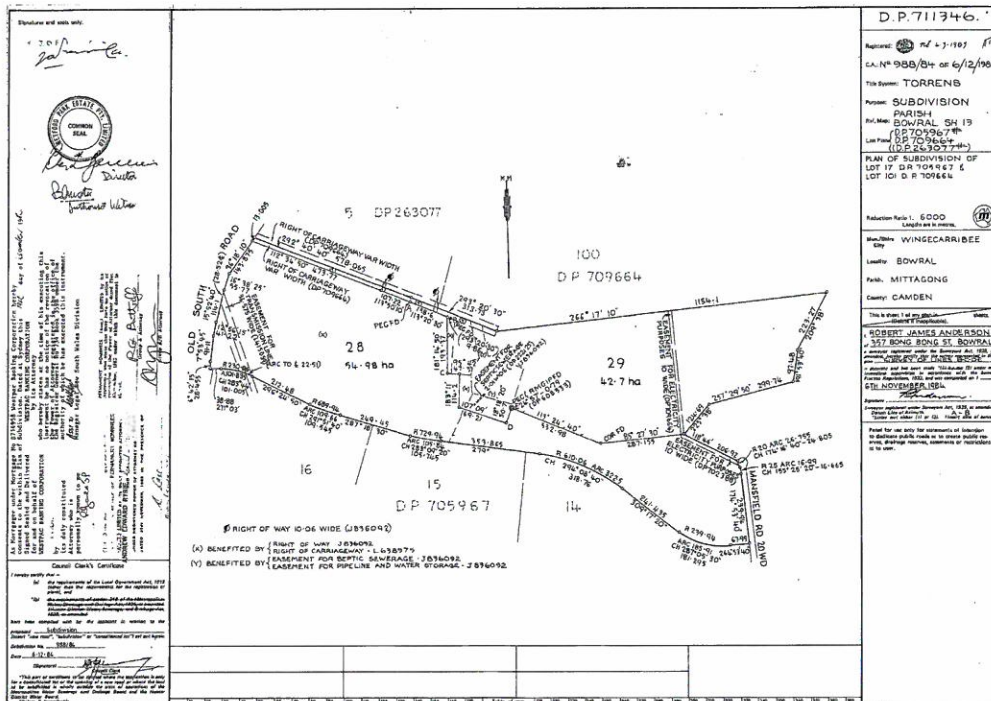
**Figure 97** Pages 1 and 3 from DP631367 showing the subdivision of former Lot 6 of DP 263077 shown in Figure 16.







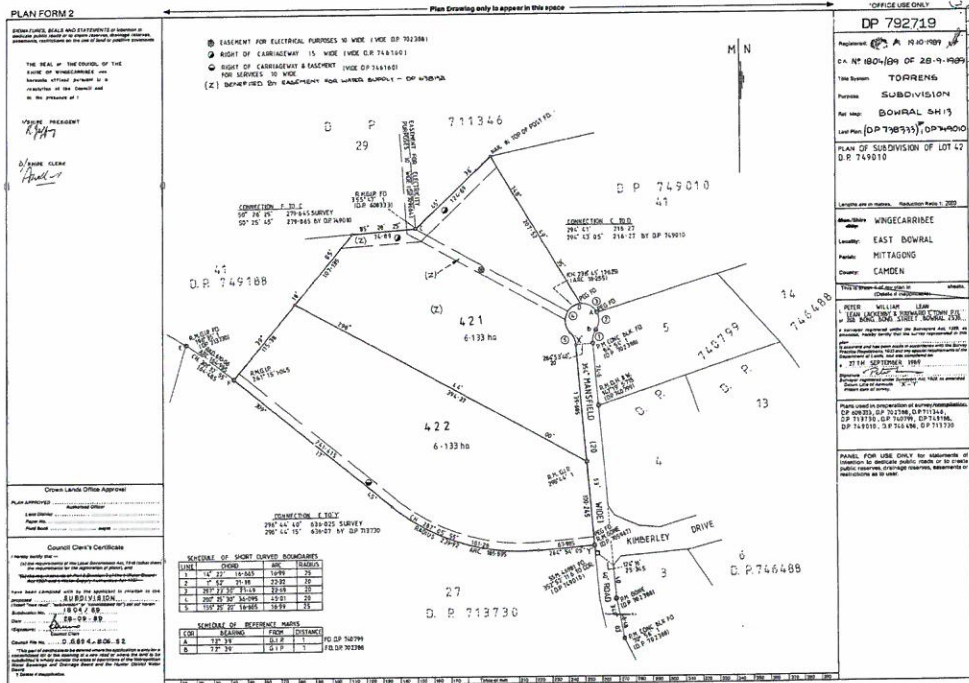
**Figure 99** The subdivision of the 90ha portion 10 to create lots 100 and 101. [DP 709664]



**Figure 100** At the end of 1984, portions 28 and 29 had been created to the west and south of portions 100 and 101. [DP711346]

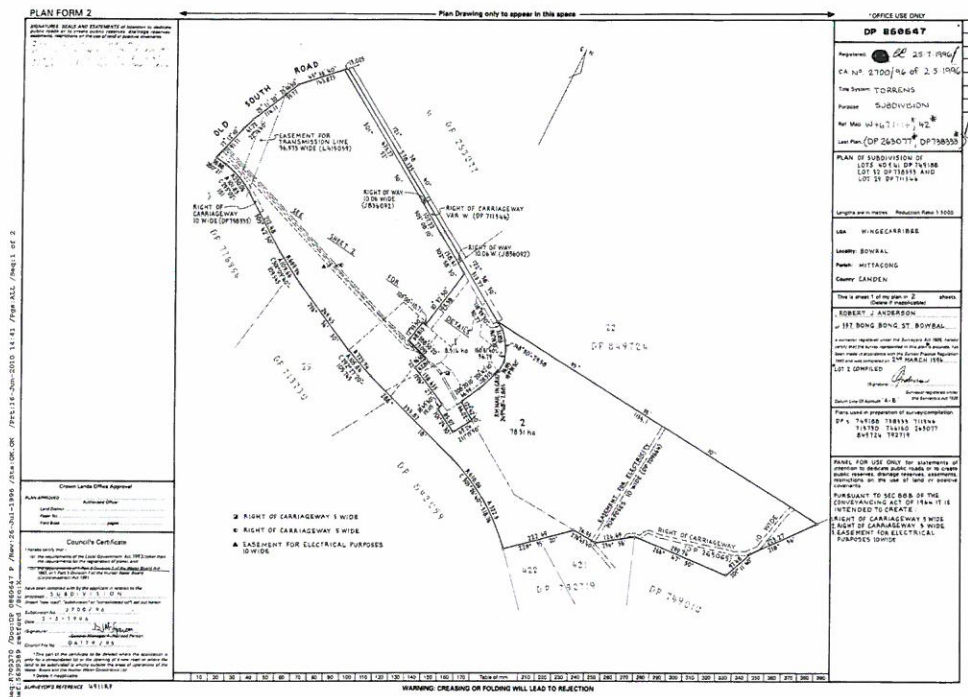


In 1992 James acquired Lot 5 DP 263077, which adjoined Retford Park on the northern side along Old South Road, from the person who had acquired it from the company Retford Park Estate Pty Ltd in the 1980s. A small portion of this property was sub-divided and sold to Wingecarribee Shire Council for use as a site for the East Bowral Water Reservoir in 2010. The remaining portion is now Lot 50 DP 11141888. Other acquisitions and subdivisions in October 1989, July 1996 and April 1999 resulted in the further refinement of the property boundaries.<sup>109</sup> In October 2010 James Fairfax was the proprietor Lots 421 and 422 of DP 792719 created in 1989; and Lots 1 and 2 of DP 860647 created in 1996 which encompassed Retford Park house and included former Lot 32 of DP 738333 on the Old South Road, purchased from Wingecarribee Shire Council in 1994. Lots 421 and 422 adjoin the south-eastern section of Lot 2. It is a reconfiguration and re-subdivision of these portions that is the subject of the current heritage assessment.



**Figure 101** Lots 421 and 422 of DP 792719 were created in 1989. Bordered on the east by Mansfield Road. Their north-western boundary adjoined what became, in 1996, Lot 2 of DP 860647.

109 LTO: DP 792719; DP 860647 and DP 1001806.



**Figure 102** Lots 1 and 2 of DP 860647 created in 1996. Lots 421 and 422 of DP792719 are indicated on the south-east. Lot 5 of DP263077 is indicated on the north-east.

The property has been subdivided many times and its boundaries were redefined through plantings at various stages in its development, firstly in the 1870s when the Riley’s began subdivision and in 1880s under the Hordern family. At the transition period that began c. 1960 subdivision again occurred and has continued intermittently since that time. While the core of the property has been retained, located as it is on the outskirts of Bowral grazing land has diminished, as the property became increasingly attractive for residential development.

In April 2011 James stated that he has seen the house as place to have friends to stay, where he could be alone if he felt like it, an escape from the trials of work, and where family could come to stay, particularly his mother. He likes the experience of the seasons that are marked at *Retford Park*, making it an enjoyable place to live at any time of the year, a very happy place and a home in every sense of the word.



## 7 Conclusion

*Retford Park* from the period when it was part of the *Broomfield* estate has been associated with grazing, but it was not until the establishment of *Retford Park* by Samuel Hordern in the 1880s and its development as a premier stud property by him, his son and grandson, (both also named Samuel) that the NSW historic theme of pastoralism emerged with such strength and importance. It remained a predominant element until the subdivisions of the 1960s. The house and outbuildings are culturally significant due to their capacity to demonstrate that theme and also the theme of creative endeavour as it relates to the house, outbuildings and landscaped grounds.

Also associated with *Retford Park* is the NSW historic theme of accommodation, with particular reference to the house and garden, a theme that developed in the Hordern proprietorship, and more strongly under that of James Fairfax. From the purchase of the house, cut off from much of its grounds and associated outbuildings by James Fairfax, the property has been used as a gentleman's country residence and the area has been gradually extended to provide an extensive landscaped setting. The house and grounds now reflect the taste, design sensibilities and lifestyle of James Fairfax and take much of their significance from their association with him. Significant people associated with *Retford Park* include the Hordern family and latterly James Fairfax and his friends and associates from the business and art world, with references to *Retford Park* appearing in important memoirs and journals. These include well know practitioners who have contributed to *Retford Park* as it is today, namely Donald Friend, Leslie Walford, John Codrington, David Wilkinson and Guilford Bell who for the most part formed part of the larger friendship circle of James Fairfax.

COPY

1, RANELAGH COTTAGES,

PIMLICO, S.W.1.

SLOANE 8923.

14 March 1967.

Retford Park, Boural, N.S.W.

1. The area in front of the front porch should, I think, be almost entirely grassed over; that is to say, all the beds and bedding plants, and also the transverse path-way should be eliminated. Similarly the two big stumps of camellia bushes on either side of the fount in should go. Instead, I suggest a red gravel path right down the middle, starting at the porch (10' wide) to the fountain basin (8'6" wide); round the fountain would go a three foot path and the straight path would then continue on (8'6" wide) to the sundial where it would have narrowed to four feet. Thus an increased (false) perspective will have been produced.

*over*  
This red path could be edged with five foot wide borders all the way down which would contain only grey-leaved plants and certain blue flowers. I had in mind teucrium fruticans and artemisia arborescens alternately, each group being about five feet. Interspersed, I suggest groups of delphiniums and agapanthus moregnus. I suggest that these borders be edged with lavender all the way down. The 'Old English' variety is fairly tall with greyish blue flowers and very sweet; the 'Hidcote' variety is rather earlier in bloom, shorter, a darker purple and not quite so strong a smell. I don't think it much matters which you choose, but the edging should be all of one or all of the other.

Around the basin of the fountain I suggest four pyramidal cypressus sempervirens. (see plan) -

If it is thought that there will be too much of a sameness in the borders, I suggest adding a touch of white at intervals e.g. white agapanthus, lilliums candidum and regale, and galtonia candicans.

I suggest 'Old English' lavender, rosemary and blue hydrangeas might be planted round the sundial plot, so that the whole of this area will be in varying shades of grey, blue, lavender and white. Other than the existing shrubs, the whole area would be mown lawn, with the cotoneaster arch retained, of course; the only other colour would be the contrasting dark red gravel path.

2. As you come out of the house, on the right is a seat which sits isolated in the lawn, looking at nothing in particular. I would like to plant a heavy evergreen background to this



seat, abolishing that part of the gravel that leads from the drive which, as far as I can judge, is not necessary. This big plantation would include camellias, ligustrum lucidum, rhododendrons, pittosporum, oleanders, arbutus and, for contrast of growth the feathery bamboo, sinarundinaria nitida. The object of all this is to make a clump to hide the seat from the porch, so that you 'come upon' it unexpectedly.

In front of the seat I would like to clear away all the evergreens from the variegated acer to the bamboo (some of them might be transplanted into the clump mentioned above), so as to show up the trunks of the two cypress or sequoias that are behind. The grass should be close mown up to these trunks so as to lead the eye towards them, leaving it rough on either side.

The beds of roses which at present run straight across the view should be eliminated altogether. Instead I suggest three tongue-like or wedge-shaped beds to stick out into the lawn from the big trees to the right (whose lower branches should be cut). These wedges should be backed with evergreens between the trees, for it will be difficult to grow much close in to the trees because of the roots. I suggest these beds be planted with shrub and species roses that need no pruning - or almost none - such as *rosa Moyesii*, *r. rubrifolia*, *r. rugosa* 'Blanc double de Coubert' and 'Rosaraine de l'Hay', musk roses such as 'Vanity', 'Wilhelm', 'Penelope' etc. The old Blush China rose, 'Stanwell Perpetual', and various others such as 'Frühlingsgold', 'Nevada', and such sturdy free flowerers as 'Queen Elizabeth'. Some of the more sturdy roses from the straight beds might find their way here too, but I do not think it is a good thing to mix H. Tea roses with the ones I have mentioned above. Some of the old-fashioned purple roses might find a place here, such as 'Cardinal Richelieu' and 'Zigeunerknabe'; while 'Amethyste' and 'Violette' might be put to ramble up the trees behind. These beds could be underplanted with violas, scillas, colchicum and *stachys lanata*.

The rough grass under the bamboo, and at the far side of the lawn could have bulbs naturalised in it, unless the summer is too hot.

3. There is also an isolated seat on the left, as you come out from the front porch. This also should be backed and hidden with evergreen shrubs and trees, right up to the cypress.

The path running across the line of vision from the seat should be removed, but where it joins the main drive, there could be a large mass of hydrangeas which could be collected from where they are at present dotted about down the drive etc. Some azaleas and lilies and *galtonia candicans* could be put among them.

on side  
Also perhaps  
rose filices  
and The yellow  
Banksia Rose

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Everything blocking the view towards the cypresses in front should be removed; this will include two camellias, a liquidambar, some oaks, birch and a thorn. This will make the magnolia show up and come into its own. The camellias might well be planted in front of the laurels, on the left, or form part of the background plantation behind the seat.

The grass should be close-mown to diminishing points down towards the cypresses etc. as in para 2, the rough grass being planted with bulbs.

4. The big beds on each side of the porch, in front of the house contain, among other things, fuchsias; these could remain, but I suggest removing from these beds all blue, white, pink and purple flowers and to mass here all sorts of hot shades of orange and scarlet. Here you could have masses of kniphofias, callistemons, lilioms tigrinum and chalcædonicum, shrubby scarlet salvias, the N.Z. pohuticawa, lychnis Haageana and chalcædonica, cocosmia Masonorum, orange and scarlet tulips and of course orange and scarlet cannas. These hot colours can be off-set with three bushes (not standards) of prunus nigra on each side, one acer platanoides 'Goldsworth Purple' cut down to a small pollard, and also some deep red leafed ricinus. Orange marigolds and scarlet alonsoa can be used as bedding annuals to fill up.

One of the objects of this mass of hot reds is to take up the good red colour of the gravel and be a complete contrast to the blues and greys of the borders described in para 1.

5. At the back, outside the dining room window, I like so much the good tomato colour you have painted underneath the roofs of the verandah. As a contrast to this, and against the deep uniform green of the Portugal laurels I would like to see a mass of pale primrose yellow and sulphur coloured shrub and plants. I suggest a big bed, roughly triangular in shape, from the box hedge to a point about halfway along the Portugal laurels. Here are some suggestions: Cephalaria tartarica, ligustrum lucidum aureo-variegatum, pale yellow Ghent azaleas, kniphofias 'Maid of Orleans', Liliom 'Golden Clarion', thalictrum flavum, moreas, irises of the appropriate colour; yellow arums, pale yellow cannas, tulips etc. with at the back, a half-standard cherry 'Ukon' which is sulphur coloured. There is also a good variegated variety of

including  
iris  
ochroleuca  
There is a very  
good wild, pale yellow  
acacia that could also be added.



the giant reed, *arundo donax*, which has cream-striped leaves and has a good contrasting shape to the other plants I have mentioned.

The bird-cage with the honeysuckle should be removed altogether, and also the ligustrum in front of the big pine, thus opening up the splendid trunk of this tree.

The phormiums in tubs are very good and add just that note of spikiness which is such a help in composition. I think one tub could be put on the concrete man-hole, and another at the end of the right hand verandah (looking out). The edge of the paving with the lawn might be marked with a few groups of yellow drums alternately with some *sisyrinchium striatum* which has leaves like irises and a pale yellow flower. *These small groups at about 5' intervals.*

6. As you look at the front porch, there seems to be a big shady patch of bed which probably doesn't get much sun, to the right of the ~~front door~~<sup>house</sup>. Here I think you should plant contrasting shapes of green leaves. I don't know if a tree fern would do at your high altitude, but it might be worth trying, together with other big leaved ferns; then the N.Z. cabbage tree, *coryline australis*, is a striking plant, and you could add hostas, rheums, acanthus, phormiums, yuccas, and the Australian 'Black Boy' or grass tree. I don't really know just how cold it does get, or for how long, but I would like to see some of the bigger leaved aroids (yams etc.) put here. If you thought there was really too much just green, you could add some aannas and kniphofias.

7. The Rose garden. I think this should be completely replanned, and I have drawn a suggestion which is based on two parallel grass paths (too short to be called 'avenues') leading from the two windows of the billiard room and ending in semicircles in each of which could be placed a piece of sculpture (a pair of two statues) or two urns. The rest of the rose garden I have planned to be complementary to these two alleys. At the back I suggest that old Victorian device for roses: posts and chains which would give a good back-drop unifying the whole garden, and be appropriate to the date of the house. Climbers, *better than ramblers*. I suggest re-digging and manuring the bed under the house and filling it with roses - no hydrangeas.

8. The swimming pool. I have sketched a design for this with curved ends and a 'temple' to house a changing room

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and filtering plant at the far end, and a fountain at the near (shallow) end. The temple could be flanked by two or more cypressus sempervirens. The pool should have a paved edge, and the soil should be banked up so that the pool itself is below the flanking evergreen hedges which should be on the top of the banks.

I experimented with ideas for a curved figure of 8 shape, with a hump-backed bridge over the 'waist' but I did not like what I had drawn; one was slightly reminded of a bidet!

9. In general, I think all the little isolated shrubs up the drive and elsewhere give a rather spotty look; they should be concentrated. If possible, bulbs should be naturalised in the grass, but it may be too hot for them in the summer. I suggest a border of close-mown grass, about four feet wide all the way up the drive; this gives an idea of 'cared-for-ness' and makes the rough grass look intentional and not merely unkempt.

Still to order.

Book garden bed (5)

Shade paths (6)

Evergreens for beds behind seats (2 & 3)



Front body 1 Standard 2 to  
longer with 100 birds

Richter left - some blue lines

Tiger belly - some birds

Remove to front  
Rose - 100 birds  
sings

Standard - fill in birds - old  
English - some birds remove  
rose may be

Play - to below 2 birds  
fill in birds - some birds

lane or pole - front of

Arizona cypress -  
1 1/2 quart

May see (with) remove  
to left house - 100 birds

F. D. Hartney to front  
1 R. D. Hartney