

RETFORD HALL 23 THORNTON STREET, DARLING POINT



Retford Hall c1958

Retford Hall, an imposing Italianate mansion, was built for the successful Sydney merchant Anthony Horden by the former Colonial Architect Edmund Blackett in the year 1865.

No expense was spared in the construction of the house which Horden named after his mother's birth place in Nottinghamshire. It was built from the finest pyrmont stone, chosen for its durability, and boasted imported English tiles and made much use of cast iron columns and balustrades. As was in keeping with the times, the two storey house was surmounted by a tower from which the owner could survey his domain, and which demonstrated his position in the world.

The family was served by seven bedrooms on the first floor, and a morning room, drawing room, dining room and breakfast room on the ground floor. It also boasted a fashionable feature of fine houses of the time, the provision of indoor plumbing, having a bathroom and w.c. on the first floor. Water was supplied by a 3000 gallon cistern in the roof, which collected rainwater. Any overflow passed into two underground tanks, where, in time of low rainfall, it could be pumped back up to the roof.

Retford Hall could lay claim to one of the finest gardens in Darling Point with grounds covering almost three acres from which its owners enjoyed views extending to The Heads, St. Leonards and the Blue Mountains.

Much advantage was taken of this natural environment by the inclusion of verandahs that extended from the main bedrooms, the drawing room and the dining room.

Briefly put up for sale prior to Anthony Horden's death in 1876, *Retford Hall* failed to find a buyer and remained in the Horden family for almost a century, little changed except for the addition, at the turn of the century, of a separate ballroom/billiard room.

By the 1950s the rapid increase in home unit developments was taking its toll on the fine mansions in Darling Point, with many being demolished and/ or their grounds subdivided. *Retford Hall* survived until 1967 when it to was finally sold, and the demolition teams moved in to clear the way for the unit block which bears its name.



Mayfair Estate subdivision showing the position of Retford Hall

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