



Humberstone, Burwood

Humberstone was built in 1869 by John Dawson. Dawson arrived in the new colony of Sydney from England. He studied law as an article clerk and on 31 March 1848 married Emma Jones at St James, Sydney. He opened a very successful law practice in the young city of Sydney.



In the mid 1860s Dawson obtained a land grant of 24 hectares in between Parramatta Road and Queen Street. He built a grand mansion in the Italianate style. He named it 'Humberstone' after his home back in England. On the ground floor were a large sitting room and drawing room, which could be thrown into one great room by means of four huge folding doors. Adjoining them were the dining room, breakfast room and library. There were wide verandahs on three sides, but the southern side was given over to store rooms, pantry, kitchen, scullery and laundry, all opening onto a courtyard. Steps led down to the cellar, and upstairs were six bedrooms for the family, two bathrooms, a dressing room, a cook's room, two maids' rooms and a verandah. Notice the horse-drawn carriage in the driveway. It would take about four hours to travel into Pitt Street, Sydney, along Parramatta Road, which in the 1860s was a dirt track.

John Dawson was an academic and scholar and his impressive library was considered one of the best in the colony. Many of his books now reside in the Mitchell Library. John Dawson died in 1902 and his wife in 1909 at Humberstone.

Soon after the house was sold and became Wychbury Grammar School until it closed in 1923. Then, the St Vincent de Paul bought the house and it became a charitable institution. They had an extensive building program and

in 1964-65 a three-storey nurses home was built around Humberstone. The building became the administration office for St Anthony's Adoption Board where unmarried mothers live until their babies were born and then adopted out. In 2004, the 1960s style building was demolished along with Humberstone. Only the exquisitely carved staircase was saved. [Acknowledgement: YouTube: Humberstone Burwood NSW – the history of a colonial mansion]