

**Dublin, 16 October 2024**

*Text read by Anne van Weerden during the plaque ceremony at Lower Dominick Street*

When I started my quest of restoring the distorted view on the private life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton, one of the existing notions was that little William, three years old, was sent away to Trim because of money problems. That had started as a vague suggestion but had become to be seen as the truth, and with the disappearance of the previous plaque on this house, the connection of Hamilton with this street was lost. The motivation for applying for this new plaque was to give Hamilton back to Dominick street.

Hamilton was born here, as the fourth child of Archibald and Sarah, but two boys had died in infancy. When William was only one month old, his mother Sarah noticed there was something unusual about him, and before he was sent to Trim to be educated, this whole street must have known about their remarkable little neighbour.

When he was four years old, and had been educated in Trim for about a year, he made one of his visits to his family. Afterwards, his mother Sarah wrote to her sister, "I had William in town, and he took up my whole thoughts." William apparently was tested for his extraordinary progress in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and his mother wrote, "It is truly funny to see the faces some of the Wise Heads put on after examining him. They cannot suppose that all this is learned by him as play, and that he could no more speak or play as children in general do, than he could fly." Imagine having such a child in your street.

Hamilton did regard *this* house as his home, and five more siblings were born into this lively family, yet two of them died young. But when he was twelve their mother Sarah died, and his father Archibald bought a new house, here on the opposite side of the street. Some years later, Hamilton revisited his birth house, and reminisced about the offices and the yard, the backparlour upstairs with the chimneypiece, and the drawing-room. About playing with his sister Eliza in the small garden, about having blown bubbles which descended from the top of the well-staircase, and the old skylight.

Both in Dublin and in Trim Hamilton lived with loving and supportive family members, and having become Royal Astronomer at a very young age, he happily married Helena Maria Bayly, Lady Hamilton as he called her in his correspondences, and he became the proud father of three children.

As a side note, also Lady Hamilton is connected to a plaque here in Dublin. After Hamilton's death she had to leave Dunsink Observatory and moved to Drumcondra. The house she lived in does not exist any more but in the grass, traces of the walls can still be seen in the satellite views of Clonturk Park, the field of Drumcondra AFC, and Clonturk Park received a plaque in March.

And lately also Hamilton's first love Catherine Disney received attention; at Killester railway station there is a beautiful panel with some local stories, and one is about Catherine, because during her teenage years she lived in Furry Park House.

I hope that the plaque we are unveiling here today will revive the memory of Hamilton as a resident of Dominick street, and one to be very proud of.