

Lady Helena Maria Hamilton's Bayly descent

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While preparing for a possible third book, next to *A Victorian Marriage* and *Catherine Disney* now about Lady Hamilton's letters, I delved into the history of the Bayly family. I now regret that in *AVM I* repeated, without thoroughly checking, something from earlier biographies, namely that Helen Bayly "was concerned with position." It had been concluded from the fact that when in October 1833 Lord Adare came to visit the Observatory, she "wanted to have one of the servants from [Bayly Farm](#) come to supplement the observatory staff. She also hoped that he would bring the Bayly livery; it was something that she would "like the people here to see."

Hamilton did not usually judge a person completely on the ground of his or her descent as was common then, and nowadays most of us would also not do that, making Helen Bayly's wish seem to be a bit out of the ordinary. But Hamilton was not at all free from finding titles important; when Adare's sister had asked Hamilton to leave out the 'Lord' when talking with or writing to her brother Hamilton found that difficult, and it can therefore be surmised that at home he did speak of him as "Lord Adare". Helen Bayly had not met Adare before this visit and she thus may have been impressed, even though her descent from a family of landed gentry will have been widely known in their time, and her neighbouring sisters were married to rich and, at least locally, important men.

There is a second reason why Helen Bayly may have been stressed about the visit; at that time they lived in difficult circumstances. Already from the time she came to live at the Observatory, April 1833, restaurations were going on in the house, which would even last until December 1834. In a time in which the virtue of a wife was measured by the state of her household, she had to receive such an eminent guest, who most likely even brought with him people from his own household staff, while the house was a mess. She thus may have, very understandably, wanted to show him her good background.

I therefore want hereby to correct my former self, and show some facts Helen Bayly could make claim to, next to of course her father having been [rector](#) of Nenagh. Why showing where she came from is also important is that in many of the biographical sketches Helen Bayly is described as a 'local lass', a girl from 'just across the fields from the observatory,' and therefore no match for Hamilton's former loves, Catherine Disney and Ellen de Vere, who came from important families. It added to the idea that she had been a weak person, instead of the direct and truthful woman as she appears from Hamilton's letters, who provided the household which enabled Hamilton to do all the work he became so famous for.

Hamilton's own family made no claim to fame; both the Hamiltons and the Huttons were very respectable, hard working families, who happened to find an extraordinary genius in their midst. That was different for the Disneys and the De Veres. Catherine Disney's father had been very rich, and her grandfather had been professor at Trinity College Dublin and Chancellor of Armagh. Ellen de Vere came from a family of Barons and Baronets, and of the three women she had the greatest claim to important descent. But also Helen Bayly's family had quite a history.

The Bayly family was a large, [influential](#) and [prosperous](#) land owning family. Helen Bayly was a great granddaughter of the Ven. Benjamin Neale (1678-1733), Archdeacon of [Leighlin](#). Some of the in-married wives were heirs, such as Deborah Neale (1702-1777), Helen's great grandmother, who was co-heir of her father Benjamin Neale, and Catherine Crosbie, the wife of her uncle John Bayly, who was co-heir of her father Lancelot Crosbie, and [inherited the estates](#) of her uncle John Crosbie. Furthermore, Hamilton's biographer Robert Perceval Graves mentioned that Helen Bayly was

"[connected](#) with Lord Dunalley [Henry Prittie (1775-1854)] and with Dean [John] Head [(ca 1790-1871)], Dean of Killaloe, who were neighbours in the country, took an interest in the marriage, and were subsequently Hamilton's acquaintances and correspondents."

Helen Bayly's connection to Dean Head is straightforward. One of her first cousins, John Bayly (1777-1820), married in 1800 Mary Elizabeth Helena Uniacke. They had a son, Richard Uniacke Bayly, who married Harriet Head (.. -1888), daughter of John Head, Dean of Killaloe.

Note: Helen Bayly, whose name officially was **Helena Maria**, and who was born four years after this marriage, may have been named after her cousin-in-law, the name Helena or Helen not having occurred before within her branch of the Bayly family.

The connection to Henry Sadleir Prittie, the 2nd Lord Dunalley, is more complicated because Helen Bayly's great grandmother **Deborah Neale** remarried within the extended family after the death of her husband. The connection will be shown in this table. In the left column the Bayly's, in the right column the Prittie's, and every new row is a new generation. The three names appearing twice are coloured.

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| William Bayly (ca 1615- ..) came to Ireland with Cromwell around 1650. After the battles in the south of co Wexford Captain William Bayly was given two areas of land for his services to Cromwell; the Townland of Upper Fearn s and Aynemoe (Askinamoe) together with a John White, and the Skeahanagh or Farmley Estate in the Union of Enniscorthy and Shilelagh, Co Wexford. It is not known whom he married. | Henry Prittie (1618-1671) of Kilboy, who was granted 5,900 acres in county Tipperary, including Kilboy, in 1666. Captain Prittie married Honor Foley (1619- ..). They lived at Dunalley Castle , Garryard west, Upper Ormond, Tipperary. The castle, which used to belong to O'Kennedy , does not exist any more, but two of the entrance gates to Kilboy House, where the fifth Henry Prittie lived, see below, are extant. |
| John Bayly (1668-1790) who obtained fee farm grants from the Duke of Ormonde in 1702, married 1690 Elizabeth Prittie (before 1675 - after 1721). They lived in Debsborough House, just as the other two John Bayly's mentioned here. | Henry Prittie (1640-1691) married 1680 Elizabeth Alcock (1660- 1701/1702) Elizabeth Prittie (before 1675 - after 1721) married 1690 John Bayly (1668-1709). She remarried in 1721. |
| John Bayly (1691-1733) married 1720 Deborah Neale (1702-1777). | Henry Prittie M.P. (1683-1738) married 1704 Elizabeth Harrison (1686- ..). |
| John Bayly (1724-1797) married 1744 Bridget Holmes (1730- ..) and then Ann Crocker (.. - ..). | Henry Prittie M.P. (1708-1768) married 1736 Deborah Neale (1702-1777). |
| Henry Neale(?) Bayly (1756-1826) married 1783 Anne Penelope Grueber (1762-1837). They lived at Violet Bank , Nenagh, later at Bayly Farm , built around 1820 . | Henry Prittie (1743-1801) married 1766 Catherine Sadleir . He became 1st Baron Dunalley of Kilboy in 1800, and lived in Kilboy House , built ca 1775 , in Upper Ormond. |
| Helena Maria Bayly (1804-1869) married 1833 William Rowan Hamilton (1805-1865). They lived at Dunsink Observatory in Dublin. | Henry Sadleir Prittie (1775-1854), 2nd Baron Dunalley, married 1802 Maria Trent (.. - before 1826) and married 1826 Emily Maude (.. - ..). |

As can be seen in the table, when **Deborah Neale** remarried, she married the great grandson of her grandfather-in-law. Helen Bayly and the 2nd Lord Dunalley thus had the same great great great grandfather, Captain Henry Prittie, and Helen Bayly's grandfather John Bayly was a half brother of Lord Dunalley's father Henry Prittie, the first Baron Dunalley.

Most information given here comes from the [Ochanoff, Goilov, Fiechter, Ferran, Persohn, Graham & Co. "family roots" web site](#), the [Bayly](#) family.