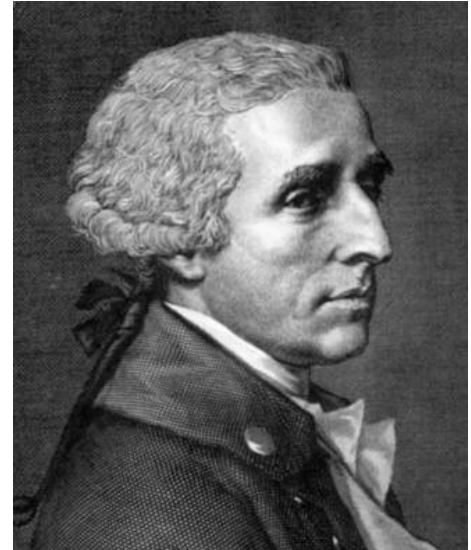


When Admiral Lord Nelson visited Tenby

Walking down St Julian Street towards the Harbour, you will see a blue plaque on East Rock House: "Admiral Lord Nelson, Sir William and Lady Hamilton stayed here in 1802".

They were visiting to inspect the new naval dockyard being built in Milford Haven on land belonging to Sir William Hamilton. Sir William, born in 1730 was well connected - he was said to be the illegitimate son of Frederick Prince of Wales, hence a half brother to King George III with whom he was brought up. Despite this Sir William was not wealthy but even so managed to spend a great deal of money on Roman pots and statuary, a field in which he was a recognised authority. He had married Catherine Barlow in 1758; she was the only child of Hugh Barlow of Lawrenny Hall in Pembrokeshire and brought to the marriage a great deal of land - including that around Milford Haven.



Catherine died in 1782 and nine years later Sir William married Emma Hart whose ability to spend money exceed even his. The £8000 a year from the Pembrokeshire estates was not enough for them and they soon slipped into debt, mortgaging the Barlow properties. Hamilton was the British Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, comprising Sicily and the southern part of modern Italy. In his absence he charged his nephew Charles Greville with managing the Pembrokeshire estate and it was Greville who came up with the scheme of increasing its value by developing the town of Milford Haven and promoting it as an ideal location for a naval dockyard.

There was little interest from the Navy until the Hamiltons involved Nelson in their campaign. In 1798 Horatio Nelson comprehensively destroyed the French Mediterranean fleet at the Battle of the Nile. This was the first significant setback for the French Revolutionary Government in its march across Europe and Nelson became a hero overnight. Returning from the battle he paused at Naples for rest and recuperation where he was taken up by the Hamiltons and became Emma's lover. Thanks to Nelson's influence the Navy Board signed a fourteen year lease on land at Milford Haven in 1800. This is why the three, who lived until Hamilton's death in 1803 as a *menage a trois*, were visiting Pembrokeshire in 1802.



The House, East Rock House (strictly 7 Rock House) where they stayed whilst in Tenby belonged to Hamilton's nephew Charles Greville. That next door, Little Rock House, belonged to Greville's younger brother, Robert Fulke Greville. Both were built around 1800.

There is a postscript to this tale. When in 1814 the lease on the Naval dockyard at Milford Haven was due for renewal, the Navy Board entered into negotiations to buy the land with Robert Fulke Greville who had taken over responsibility from his brother after Charles' death in 1809. Probably because of the mortgages, Robert was unable to offer acceptable terms to the Navy which transferred its operations to the other side of Milford Haven - modern Pembroke Dock. With the loss of her income Emma Hamilton, the sole survivor of the *menage a trois* was not able to service her debts and died in poverty in Calais in 1815.

Douglas Fraser is a retired businessman who came to live in Tenby because he thought it to be the finest place in the World.