

48 The Wilde Family Home, 1 Merrion Square, Dublin - 20 April 2025

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in 1854 at 21 Westland Row, Dublin, now home to the Oscar Wilde Centre for Irish Writing.

He had an older brother William Robert Kingsbury (1852 - 1899) who became a poet, a journalist, estranged from Oscar, impoverished and who met an early death due to complications related to alcoholism.

In 1855, his parents, Sir William Wilde (1815-1876) a leading ear and eye surgeon, knighted for his services to the medical profession, a renowned philanthropist, a gifted writer and his wife Jane Francesca (1821-1896) a successful poet and journalist who wrote under the pseudonym 'Speranza', moved to the grander address of 1 Merrion Square, to a house built in 1760, the first to be built on that prestigious square.



Sir William Wilde



Lady Jane Wilde



The house at 1 Merrion Square



Oscar dressed as girl as was then the custom with young boys

Oscar's nursery was at the top of the house in a room which remained his throughout his years as a child and to which he would return as a student when studying classics at Trinity College Dublin. It's a good size room which looks out in a southerly direction through two windows towards the corner of the square below - a square lined on all sides by grand Georgian houses and the enormous park garden they enclose.



Oscar's bedroom



The view from Oscar's bedroom down to the corner of Merrion Square



The Park Garden - Merrion Square

In 1857 the household was joined by the arrival of a younger sister Isola Francesca Emily born in 1857 and who Oscar once described as being 'like a golden ray of sunshine dancing about our home'. Isola sadly died when Oscar was only twelve years old, a death which deeply affected the young boy.



Isola Wilde

Fourteen years after Isola's death, Oscar poured out his grief and sorrow in his poem, *Requiescat*, published in 1881:

Tread lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.



Oscar (1875?)

For more than two decades 'Speranza' held a weekly salon at the house which attracted the best and brightest of Dublin's intellectuals. When old enough, Oscar was encouraged by his parents to attend and to amuse the company with his stories, events at which he first honed his skills as a master of conversation and repartee.



First Floor Landing 1 Merrion Square

1 Merrion Square is now home to the American College Dublin but remains open to visitors who want to know more about the Wilde family and to spend time in the house that was theirs. If you go don't miss the excellent video that introduces the visit and tells about Oscar's adult life and its sad end.

Oscar died in Paris, France in 1900.

We visited the house for a second time during our visit to Dublin and again were moved by walking through the rooms which had once been home to so illustrious and interesting a family, had once been home to so great and so tragic a figure as Oscar Wilde.



Oscar (1890?)