

# John Henry Newman

## *The Early Years (1801-1825)*



**'I was born.'** So reads the retrospective journal entry of Newman for 21 February 1801. The future Cardinal was born at 80, Old Broad Street, near the site of the present London Stock Exchange. A stable and happy childhood in a prosperous family was followed by an equally contented school life at Ealing. Yet the political background to Newman's early years was anything but peaceful. His birth came amid the long years of war, with first Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France. One of his earliest memories was of the celebrations for the victory at Trafalgar.

His family were moderate Church of England members, but in 1816, the young John Henry underwent a dramatic spiritual conversion of a broadly Evangelical kind: 'I should be contradicting my own individuality and personality, if I was not as sure that God changed me altogether when I was a boy of fifteen, as I am . . . that St Augustine is a Doctor of the Church.' It was with such a heart that Newman went up to Oxford, to undergraduate study at Trinity College and then the academic distinction of an Oriel Fellowship.



### Grey Court House, Ham

This country house was rented by Newman's father between 1804 and 1807. The place it held in Newman's affections was profound. He idealised the location as a school boy, and confessed when he was sixty, 'it has ever been in my dreams.' On a visit he looked at the windows, 'where I lay aged five looking at the candles stuck in them in celebration of the victory of Trafalgar.'



*Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar.*

### Newman's Father

Of a family that hailed from Cambridgeshire, the second John Newman, was a partner first in the bank of Harrison, Prickett, and Newman, and then in that of Ramsbottom, Newman, and Ramsbottom (*bottom right*). The recession which followed the end of the long years of war with France led to the folding of this, as with very many banking and other concerns.

Problems beset his next attempt at business, and, in November 1821, he was declared bankrupt, the house at Southampton Street and its contents were sold, and 'after a few years his anxieties brought him to his end.'

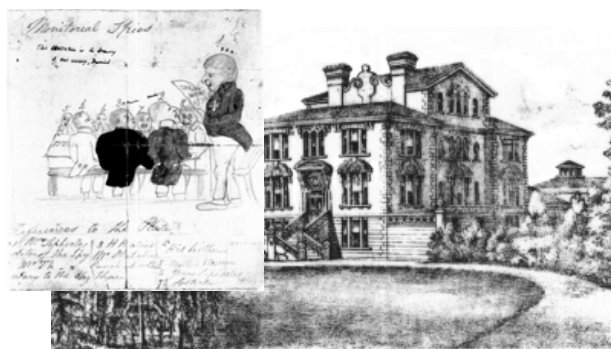


*Wellington at the battle of Waterloo.*



### 17, Southampton Street (right)

Was Newman's father's residence in London from 1808-21. The other members of the family had moved in a year or so earlier. The oldest, John Henry had lived for the first seven years of his life either with his grandmother at Fulham or at Ham, during the birth and infancy of the younger ones: 'Two of my sisters were born there, and one of my first memories, even before the first of these events in 1808, is my admiring the borders of the paper in the drawing rooms.'

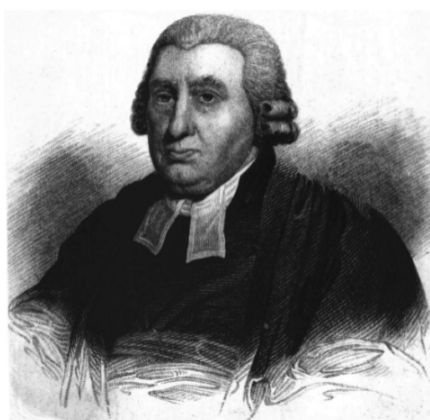


### Great Ealing School (left)

In May 1808, John Henry Newman arrived at Ealing School as a boarder. A large private school of about 290 boys, it was run along the lines of the public schools by the genial Dr George Nicholas. 'Dr Nicholas . . . was accustomed to say that no boy had run through the school, from the bottom to the top, so rapidly as John Newman.' At the end of his time at Ealing School, John Henry underwent his conversion, influenced by Thomas Scott.

### Thomas Scott ' . . . to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul.'

Scott was an Evangelical writer and clergyman who in his *The Force of Truth* traced his gradual recovery from a period of Arianism and then Unitarianism, to attainment of a firm and fervent Trinitarian faith. Newman confessed, 'I so admired and delighted in his writings that, when I was an undergraduate, I thought of making a visit to his parsonage, in order to see a man whom I so deeply revered.'



### Alton (left)

The Newman family home after the bank's collapse. The catastrophe of the summer having passed: 'My Father's partners in the Banking House were great brewers at Windsor . . . When the Banking House wound up its accounts in 1816, those gentlemen were the means or occasion of my Father's undertaking an old and well established brewery in Alton from the hands of a friend of theirs.'

### Oxford from the London Road

John Henry Newman was entered for Trinity College, Oxford, in December 1816, aged only 15. 'It was said in those days that the approach to Oxford by the Henley Road was the most beautiful in the world. Soon after passing Littlemore you came in sight of, . . . the sweet city with its dreaming spires . . . open then to cornfields on the right, to uninclosed meadows on the left . . . At once, without suburban interval, you entered the finest quarter of the town, rolling under Magdalen Tower, and past the Magdalen elms.'



## Trinity College (right)

Having been entered there in the previous December, Newman went into residence at Trinity College, Oxford, in June 1817. A year later he won what was to prove an invaluable Scholarship. Departing for Maryvale in 1846, Newman called on his former private tutor, James Adey Ogle: 'In him I took leave of my first College, Trinity, which was so dear to me, and which held on its foundation so many who had been kind to me both when I was a boy, and all through my Oxford life. Trinity had never been unkind to me.' 'No compliment could I feel more intimately, or desire more eagerly . . .' was an overwhelmed Newman's response to his unexpected election to an Honorary Fellowship of the College in 1877.



TRINITY COLLEGE

## The Oxford Fly (left)

In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'stagecoaches sped along the roads into Oxford all day long - 'Tantivy, Defiance, Rival, Regulator, Mazeppa . . . heaped high with ponderous luggage and with cloaked passengers, thickly hung at Christmas time with turkeys, with pheasants in October; their guards, picked buglers, sending before them as they passed Magdalen Bridge, the now forgotten strains of "Brignall Banks," "The Troubadour" . . . on the box their purple faced many-caped drivers.'



## Frank Newman

The youngest of the three Newman brothers, Francis William was also educated at Ealing School. Like John Henry, he came under the influence of Walter Mayers and was also drawn to strong Evangelical views. At the time of his matriculation at Oxford his father's business interests had collapsed completely, and much of the burden of his education fell on to his eldest brother, who was having to supplement his own Scholarship income by taking private pupils. A Double First in 1826, was followed by election to a Balliol Fellowship. His increasingly Nonconformist beliefs led him to abandon Oxford in 1830, and in a few years he had drifted to Unitarianism.

## Seal's Coffee House

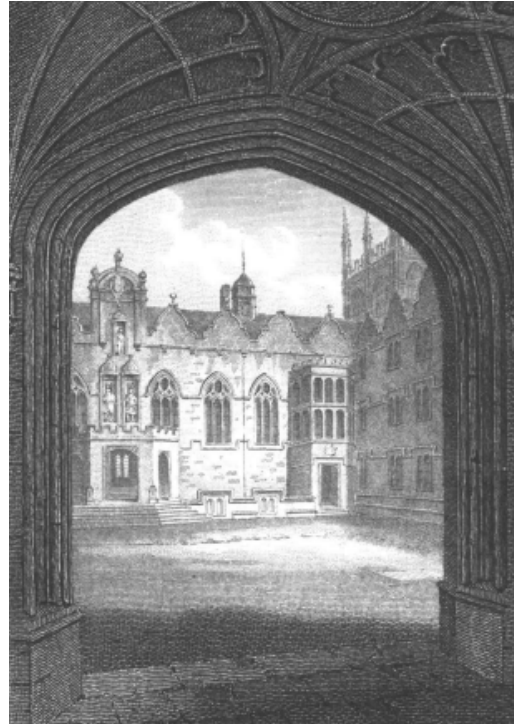
In the summer of 1821, Newman moved out of Trinity College, and from then until 1826 was in various lodgings. He explained to his father: 'My greatest difficulty is to get good lodgings. I have found one . . . being a Coffee House, it is handy, as having dinner etc. all under one roof.' Seal's was, 'at the corner of Holywell and Broad Street, looking down Broad Street', and Newman remained there until he was elected Fellow of Oriel.





## **Oriel College** *(right)*

The vigorous policies of two determined Provosts had led Oriel to the intellectual forefront of the Oxford Colleges. To contend for one of the prestigious Fellowships was a daring and ambitious feat on the part of the 21 year old Newman. Notwithstanding his own and the Fellows of Trinity's apprehensions, success was the result, and, 'as to Mr Newman he ever felt this twelfth of April 1822 to be the turning point of his life, and of all days the most memorable.'



## **St Alban Hall** *(left)*

A mixture of mismanagement and neglect had led the Hall to become a sort of Botany

Bay of the University - a place where students were sent who were felt to be either too idle or dissipated to hold a place at one of the main Colleges. In March 1825 Richard Whately, Newman's colourful and strongheaded Oriel mentor, was appointed to the vacant Principalship. Upon his induction, Whately's first action was to invite his most recent protegee to be his Vice-Principal, and, together, the two rather different new brooms set about a root and branch reform.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **REGARDING**

1. The Newman **National Day of Prayer** on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2001,
2. Prayercards and Novena Leaflets, or
3. Newman Literature and Booklists,

### **CONTACT**

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*The material presented in this supplement is part of a collection of visual resources which are being drawn together to form a database and from which it is hoped a fuller web-site will be created. More details in due course.*