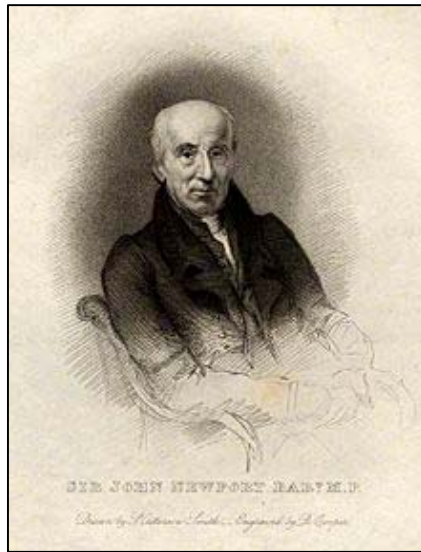


WATERFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**Sir (Simon) John Newport: 'The political ferret'
Banker and Politician**

Born in Waterford in 1756 (coincidentally the same year his father John became mayor for the city), he would go on to be educated at Eton, and would enter the Irish bar after a time at Lincoln's Inn (though he did not ever practice), and by 1789 was made a baronet. He came to prominence in his native city when he became an alderman of the corporation and was a part of the committee that was empowered to deal with the construction of a bridge over the river Suir in the 1780s and early 1790s.

At heart, Newport was a liberal who supported Catholic relief in 1792, and believed that Catholic Emancipation would be achieved through the Act of Union which he favoured. By 1803, Newport would become an MP for Waterford city, who he represented till 1832, the same year as the Parliamentary Reform Act. In the House of Commons, he aligned himself with William Wyndham Grenville's Whig regime. His family business of banking would lead him to become the primary spokesperson on Irish finances, and a fervent critic of Irish budgets while in opposition. Another issue he devoted his political career to included the abolition of the slave trade.

However, his activities in Westminster would be curtailed upon the collapse of the Newport family bank. It appears that Newport's creditors were not compensated, though he was regulator of the exchequer in the intervening years, 1832 to 1839, receiving a wage of £1,000 annually. In 1830, he declined a position in government when the Grenvillites aligned themselves with Lord Liverpool, due to the reluctance of the Liverpool administration to deal with the issue of Catholic Emancipation previously.

On the 9 February 1843 Newport died in Waterford.

Cian Manning