

BLACKBURN, Edward Berens

Chief Judge of Mauritius, was born at Bush Hill in Middlesex, fourth son of John Blackburn (London merchant, 1731-1798), and no known relation of John Blackburne, many years M. P. for Lancaster. His mother died in childbirth in June 1786, and his father remarried in January 1789 the widow of his colleague John Berens, who had died on the last day of 1788. Educated at Harrow School and St Johns Cambridge, he took his B.A. in 1809, M.A. in 1812, and was called to the bar in 1816. He married Eliza Mary Madocks (of the Glanywern family): her father, who committed suicide in 1806, married in 1792 a daughter of the earl of Craven; so she was a grand-daughter of the notorious Margravine of Anspach (1750-1828; see D.N.B.). In 1824 he was appointed judge in Mauritius, becoming in 1831 the first chief judge. As such he was a member of the Council of Government. From 1833 until 1835 he was president of the Société Royale des Arts et des Sciences; he was a keen botanist, and his name is inscribed on the Liénard monument. He lived at Monplaisir in Pamplemousses (where the traveller Holman visited him); the Civil Status registers for Pamplemousses record in 1827 the birth and in March 1830 the death of John Madocks Lowry Blackburn; \also in February 1832 the marriage of his daughter Eliza (born in London on 11 March 1814) to an Irishman, John Vaughan.

Blackburn was one of the judges in the Grand Port trial whom John Jeremie (q.v.) sought to remove before the trial was held; the governor rejected Jeremie's plea, and the five accused Mauritians were later acquitted of treasonable plotting. Blackburn was accused (according to a pro-Jeremie pamphlet - British Museum 8154. d. 65 Tracts on the Colonies 1834.61) of having revised the criminal code so that persons accused of treason might not be punished severely; this is probably a reference to Lord Ripon's despatch of 15 March 1833, which was very greatly modified by a later despatch from Lord Stanley, who succeeded Ripon. Blackburn was also criticised for having an interest in the slave-cultivated estate of Mont Mascal; but his view was that so long as slavery was legal, there was nothing illegal in owning slaves, and when slavery had been abolished, there could no longer be any slave-owners. He left Mauritius in 1835, and in November 1836 was voted a service of plate for having contradicted a ministerial story that the slaves of Mauritius, through some informality of registration, had not become apprentices. He died of apoplexy at Alnwick in Northumberland on 7 August 1839, aged 53, according to the death certificate.

P. J. BARNWELL

Bibliographie

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Gentleman's Magazine(1786, 1789, 1798 and 1803).

Matthew Gregson -*Fragments of Lancashire*, p. 216.

Venn - *Alumni Cantabrigienses.*

Source

Extrait du *Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne*, Pages 842-843.

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