

DE BLAQUIÈRE Jean Baron I

Lieutenant-Colonel John de Blaquièrè, 1st Baron de Blaquièrè, of the 17th dragoons, 5th son of John Blaquièrè, of a noble French family, who emigrated from France, in consequence of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and settled in London England as a merchant, where he died in 1753), born 15 May, 1732.

He was for some time in the counting-house of a London merchant, and then entered the army. His first official employment was as secretary of legation in France with Lord Harcourt, 1771-1772, and when that nobleman went to Ireland in 1772 as lrd lieutenant, Blaquièrè accompanied him as his chief secretary, 1772-1777). He represented a number of constituencies in the Irish parliament: Old Leighlin until 1783, Carlington from that date to 1790, Charleville 1790-1797, and Newtown from 1797 until the extinction of the Irish parliament. In 1801 he was elected for Rye in the parliament of the United Kingdom, and in June 1803 he was returned for Downton in Wiltshire.

One of Blaquièrè's first experiences on Irish soil was a duel with Mr Beauchamp Bagnal in 1773, at 41, but he soon received considerable advancement.

He was sworn of the privy council, invested in 1774 with the military order of the Bath, created a baronet 16 July 1784, and raised to the Irish peerage Baron De Blaquièrè, of Ardkill, county Londonderry, on 31 July 1800. He became bailiff of Hoenix Park, alnager of Ireland, and commissioner of the paving board. Many of the chief improvements in Dublin were effected under his care, and even envy allowed that, pluralist as he was, his money was spent in his adopted country.

A gourmet with social and convivial tastes. He possessed of much good sense, with « no small fund of useful and various knowledge, heightened by many strokes of art, » he enjoyed greater popularity than most of his predecessors and successors in his difficult office.

His advocacy in 1773 of the imposition of a tax on absentee landlords caused some excitement among the Irish gentry and peers who habitually lived away from their estates, but did not tend to diminish his popularity among the majority of his neighbours.

When he ceased to be in power, it was generally remarked that he was the only secretary who was known to have resided in Ireland when he no longer drew the pay of office. He died at Bray, county Wicklow, on 27 August, 1812.

By his wife, Eleanor, only daughter of Robert Dobson of Cork, whom he married 24 December, 1775, he had numerous children. An engraved portrait of this genial politician is in Barrington's "Historic Memoirs".