



LORD GODDARD

BORN 10.4.1877
DIED 29.5.1971

ADM IT 1896
CALL 1891
BENCHER 1929; LCJ 1946-58
FIRST NON-POLITICAL LCJ



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PROFILE

Rayner Goddard, later Baron Goddard of Aldbourne, was born on 10 April 1877 in Notting Hill. He was educated at Marlborough College, which he loved; as Lord Chief Justice he returned there to referee the 1st VI Schools Meeting on the newly-opened racing track, and was President of the Old Marlburian Club in 1959-60. As a pupil, he participated in every debate held by the Debating Society, his speeches including one in favour of the Rifle Corps and another against the New Woman. After Marlborough he went to Trinity College, Oxford, where he studied Jurisprudence. While there he was awarded a Blue for athletics, winning the 100 yards race with a time of 10 $\frac{3}{5}$ seconds; he kept the card telling him that he had been awarded the Blue for the rest of his life.

In 1896, while at Trinity, Goddard joined the Inner Temple as a student member. Although one of his lecturers, William Anson (of Anson's Law of Contract), told him he would never make a lawyer, he was called to the Bar in January 1899 and began practicing on the Western Circuit. In 1906 he married Marie Linda Schuster, with whom he had three daughters.

During the First World War, Goddard left his work at the Bar, becoming Temporary Legal Assistant for War Work at the Board of Trade; he returned to practice in 1918. During the intervening period (in November 1917) he became Recorder of Poole. He took silk in February 1923, and was appointed Recorder of Bath in 1925 and Recorder of Plymouth in 1928, becoming a Bencher of the Inner Temple the following year.

He first became more widely known in 1929, when he stood as an Independent Conservative candidate for South Kensington in the General Election, opposing the Conservative incumbent, Sir William Davison. Davison had recently had his marriage dissolved, and some feared that voters would not want to support a divorced man; Goddard ran as the "Purity" candidate. He came last in the poll, with 6,365 votes. Davison retained his seat.

Goddard was made a judge of the King's Bench Division of the High Court in 1932, also receiving the customary knighthood. He quickly became known for efficiency; if barristers did not arrive on time, their cases were struck out, and proceedings were conducted in a brisk, no-nonsense manner. In 1938, when the Court of Appeal was

enlarged and three additional Lords Justices were required, Goddard was one of those appointed. In 1944, following his impressive performance conducting the Hereford Birching Inquiry the previous year, he was made a Life Peer and Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, taking the title Baron Goddard of Aldbourne. Finally, in 1946, he became Lord Chief Justice: the first non-political appointee (most previous holders of the post had first been Attorney General) and the first to have a law degree.

Goddard was strongly against the abolition of the death penalty, and approved of corporal punishment in general; in his maiden speech in the House of Lords he spoke against the abolition of birching (but in favour of the abolition of the cat o' nine tails). The judgment he is best known for is probably the one in the trial of Christopher Craig and Derek Bentley in 1952. During a burglary, Craig (aged sixteen) had shot and killed a police officer after Bentley (aged nineteen) had called, "Let him have it, Chris" when the officer asked for the gun. Goddard directed the jury that Bentley had been as guilty of firing the shot as Craig, despite contradictory evidence regarding Bentley's knowledge of the gun's presence. Goddard also made no reference to Bentley's mental state; he had a low IQ score and could not read. Both were convicted of murder; because of his age, Craig was given a life sentence, but Bentley was sentenced to death, despite the jury's recommendation of mercy. The Home Secretary chose not to commute the sentence (Goddard sent him a note saying he could find "no mitigating circumstances") and Bentley was hanged. In 1998, his conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal.

Lord Goddard retired in 1958. He died at his home in the Queen Elizabeth Building, Temple, in 1971.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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