

A Pastoral Song and Discord

By

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The Reverend John Black was perpetual curate of Butley from 1789 and fulfilled the same function at Ramsholt from 1807. He was residing in Woodbridge when he died on 30 August 1813, but was buried in Butley shortly afterwards. He was aged 59 and described as a classical scholar with poetic talent. The latter was demonstrated in a poem printed in *The Suffolk Garland*, published in 1818. Entitled *A Pastoral Song*, it was written in 1792 in praise of Barbara, the third wife of the Marquess of Donegall, who used Butley Priory Gatehouse as a shooting lodge at times for some years. The couple had married in 1790.



St John the Baptist, Butley

The poem contains five verses, the first of which reads as follows:

Ye shepherds round Butley who stray
Attending your sable-faced sheep
Drive sorrow and care far away
Give your tears and your sighs to the deep!
See, how the old Abbey looks gay
No ivy now creeps o'er its wall
Its columns of smoke curling play
In honour of *fair* Donegall.

Verse four refers more directly to the fair lady:

Her look is benignant and kind
Her complexion outvies e'en the rose
By her face you may see that her mind
Is the seat where the virtues repose
Such beauty and goodness combined
Enraptures the bosoms of all
Our hearts, with our voices are joined
In the praise of the *fair* Donegall.

In the last verse the curate describes himself as 'a rustical Swain', and asks her pardon, presumably for thus addressing her. The Marquess was described by Horace Walpole as, 'a serious well-disposed nobleman who has expended £20,000 on books as yet unopened and £10,000 on shells not yet unpacked.'

The Gentlemen's Magazine printed a short biography of The Reverend John Black ending with the words, 'the pious resignation of a Christian sustained him in the troubles and