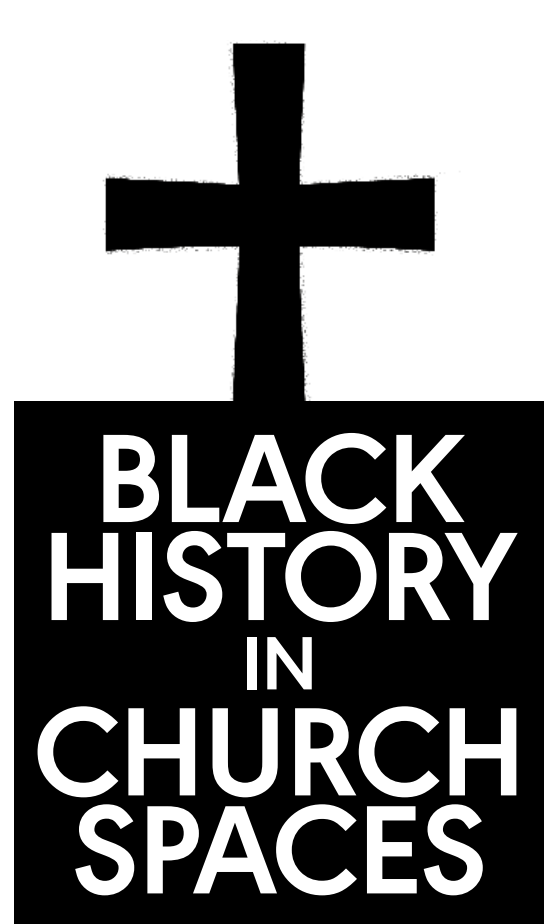




Black History in Church Spaces

This exhibition explores the often overlooked contributions of ordinary Black people to Christianity and the British Empire.

From rural East and West Sussex to across to the wider reaches of the African continent, we take you on a journey. We explore the Black history in our local church spaces and how it relates to wider themes of faith, sacrifice and devotion. As the founder and creator of Black History in Church Spaces, I am immensely proud to see this vision become a reality. To my knowledge, this is the first exhibition of its kind within the Diocese, and it has been a privilege to work alongside such a committed and talented team to bring it to fruition.

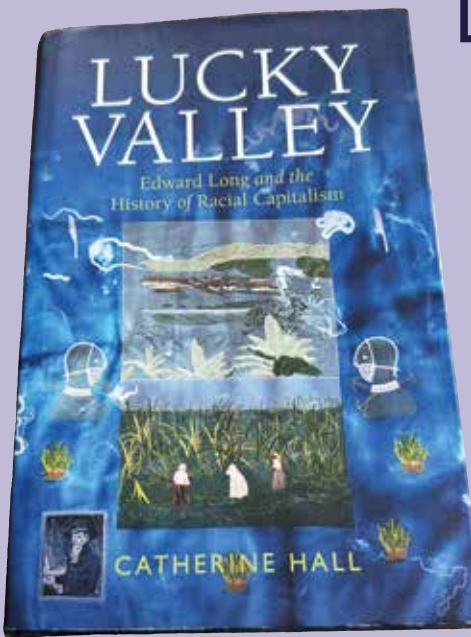
We hope you enjoy our exhibition and it leaves you feeling inspired and eager to know more.

Vitalis Ngwambi – Racial Justice Coordinator, Chichester Diocese

A rare memorial



Above: Fr Peter Dyson of St Mary Magdalene Church pointing to a plaque for Edward Montagu. Ferdinand's plaque is on the opposite side of the church. Ferdinand was settled at Yapton in Sussex, where his enslaver George Thomas had retired, and carried on working as a free man and a cook after Thomas' death.



Left: 'Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism' by historian Catherine Hall examines the life of Edward Long – an 18th century planter, slave-owner, and author of the 1774 History of Jamaica, the most influential defence of plantation slavery. Long also has a memorial in St Mary Magdalene Church.



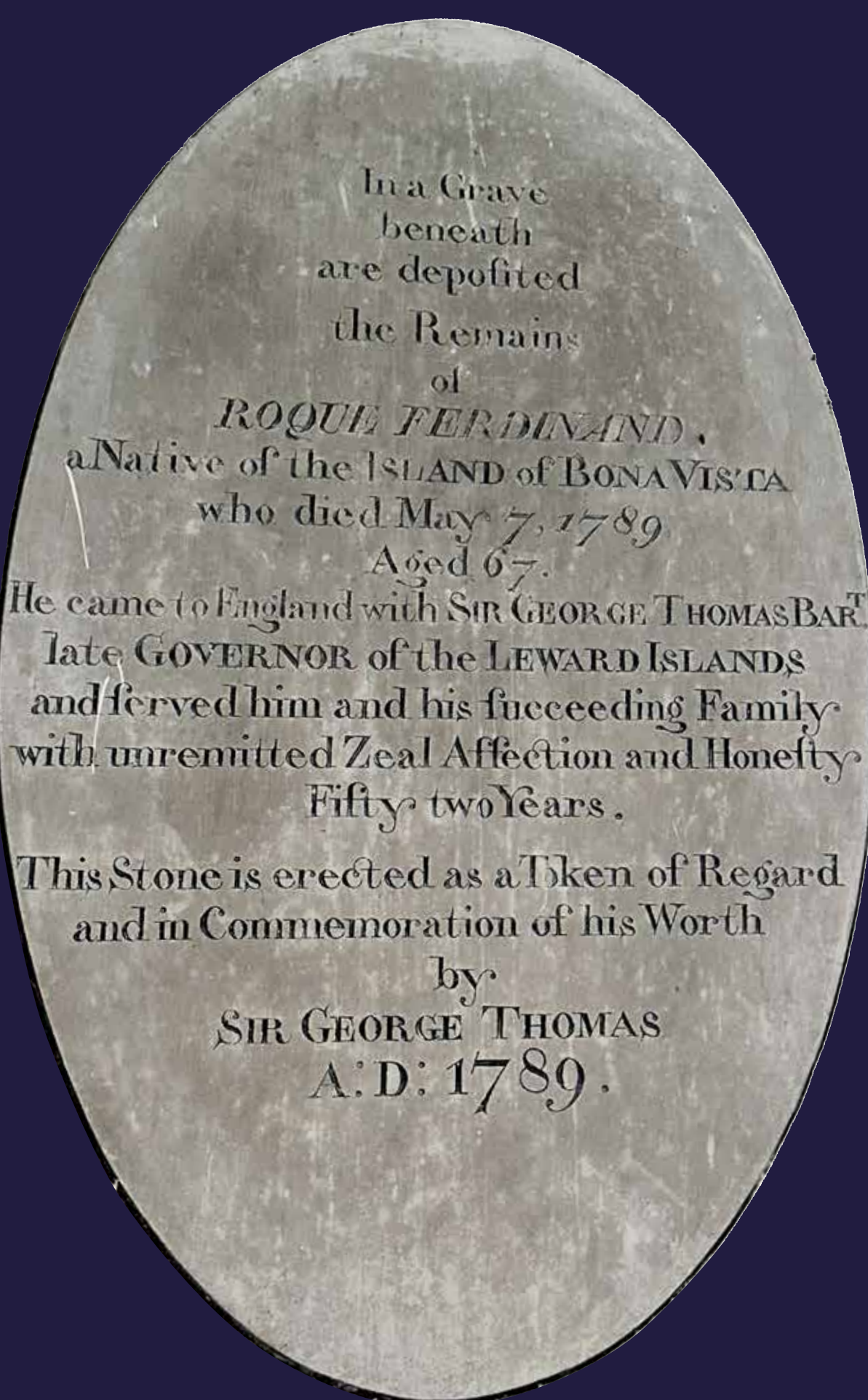
Above: interior of Mary Magdalene church. Roque Ferdinand's memorial plaque is just visible on the right hand wall.



Use this QR code to access more information about Black History on the Diocese of Chichester site.

Who was Roque Ferdinand?

The large memorial to him in St Mary Magdalene Church, Madehurst, West Sussex reads:



"In a grave beneath are deposited the Remains of ROQUE FERDINAND a Native of the ISLAND of BONA VISTA who died May 7. 1789 Aged 67. He came to England with SIR GEORGE THOMAS BART late GOVERNOR of the LEWARD ISLANDS and served him and his succeeding Family with unremitting Zeal Affection and Honesty Fifty two Years. This Stone is erected as a Token of Regard and in Commemoration of his Worth by SIR GEORGE THOMAS A.D. 1789."

Roque Ferdinand was born on the island of Bonavista (or Boa Vista), part of the Cape Verde Islands off the West coast of Africa. The islands supplied captives to early Portuguese sugar plantations, and later became a key stop in the transatlantic slave trade.

He was 'purchased' by Sir George Thomas in 1737 when he was about 15 years old. Thomas was then on his way to become governor of Pennsylvania and Roque Ferdinand travelled with him to Pennsylvania, London and then the Leeward Islands working as Thomas's cook. When Thomas retired in 1766 he settled in Yapton, West Sussex taking Ferdinand with him.

Thomas released Ferdinand from slavery only upon his own death in 1773, providing for Ferdinand's freedom with £20 a year in his will. Ferdinand experienced only 16 years of freedom during which time he carried on in domestic service for Thomas' son.

The Thomas family appear to have treated Ferdinand differently from the other Africans they "owned" on their two sugar plantations on Antigua (called Winthorpe and North Sound) which were managed by Dr. Walter Tullideph.

Tullideph's letter written in 1749 references Thomas' purchase of the Yapton estate in Sussex:

"There are many Vessells gone to the Coast of Guiney, so that it is probable slaves will be in plenty this year. I think to buy four young Girls and two Men boys, for Winthorpes, in the crop, and I suppose as many at least for [North Sound]. I congratulate you on the agreeable purchase you have made in England [the estates of Yapton and Ratton in Sussex]. By this Vessel there is 15 hhds. [hogsheads] of No. Sd. Sugar gone to Mr. Douglass, which I wish safe. I am Yrs. &c."

After Thomas' death his son inherited the Antiguan plantations and built the country house, Dale Park in Madehurst. His great-grandson later received the equivalent of around £240,000 today in compensation for the loss of his human "property" when slavery was abolished. The formerly enslaved and their descendants received no compensation at all.

Roque Ferdinand's memorial is believed to be one of only two known plaques commemorating a formerly enslaved person within the Church of England making it especially significant.

It reminds us that people of African heritage have been part of Sussex communities for centuries, their contributions woven into the history of this nation. The selective nature of the historical archive, however, makes it difficult to portray his life in his own words. We can only speculate about how he maintained his identity, dignity and faith as he moved across the Empire serving the Thomas family.



tinyurl.com/black-history-in-church-spaces