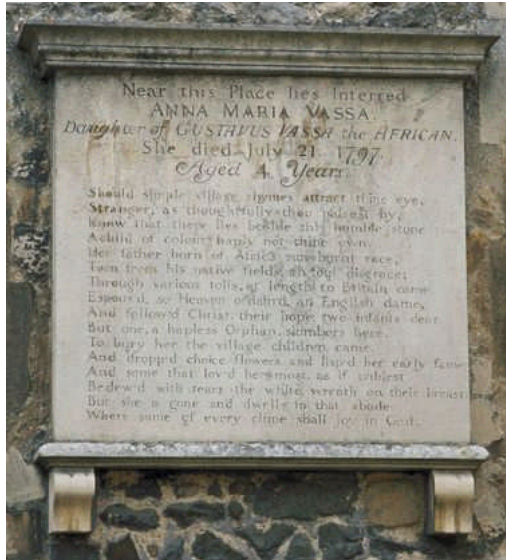


A HISTORY OF ST ANDREW'S IN 100 OBJECTS



15.

Monument to
Anna-Maria Vassa
Date: around 1797

Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa was a slave in the West Indies and in the southern states of America. After sixteen years of slavery he managed to save enough money to buy his freedom. He came to England and wrote a book about his experiences, called *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African, written by himself*. It was published in 1789. It told the his life story including his African upbringing, his capture from his village at the age of 11 and his crossing the Atlantic in a slave ship. His extraordinary sea-faring tales, his conversion to Christianity and his first-hand account of the horrors of slavery—as well as his own skill as a publicist and campaigner—led to the book being a bestseller and a key tool in the changing of public opinion about the slave trade. Equiano married Susanna Cullen of Soham in 1792; they had two children, Joanna and Anna-Maria, but both parents had died by early 1797 and, as orphans, were cared for in Chesterton, possibly at Roebuck House. Anna-Maria died in July of that year, perhaps in a measles epidemic, and is buried in the churchyard. The (rather lovely) epitaph was probably written by Martha Peckard, wife of Peter Peckard, a leading abolitionist and master of Magdalene College. It describes how village children laid flowers at her grave. On the Sunday nearest the anniversary of her death (17 July this year) children lay a white wreath here in memory of the 'child of colour not thine own'.

