

When you read this article, the Easter weekend will be nearly upon us. When thinking about writing I wondered what AI would suggest for an article regarding St Mary the Virgin at Clapham and the Easter celebration. It came up with the following:

Easter at St Mary the Virgin, Clapham: A Journey Through Time and Tradition.

Nestled in the serene South Downs, St Mary the Virgin Church in Clapham, stands as a testament to nearly 900 years of English history. *(True)*. As Easter approaches, this Grade I-listed sanctuary transforms from a quiet historical landmark into a vibrant centre of resurrection celebration. *("Vibrant centre" is interesting! Google obviously hasn't been to Clapham!)*

A Legacy Carved in Stone and Glass

The church's architecture itself tells the story of the Passion. Visitors often notice that the chancel is slightly misaligned with the nave - a deliberate 12th-century design choice intended to mimic the angle of Christ's head on the cross.

During the Easter season, the church's interior highlights take on special significance:

- **The William Morris Reredos:** Behind the altar, stunning tiles designed by William Morris depict the four archangels—Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel. These rare 1873 masterpieces provide a backdrop of celestial glory for the Easter liturgy.
- **The Leper Window:** A poignant reminder of inclusion, this low window historically allowed those with leprosy to observe the service and receive communion without entering the main congregation.
- **England's Oldest Bells:** The belfry houses three bells, believed to be the **oldest ring of three in England**, which peel out on Easter morning to announce the Resurrection. *(They won't be peeling out this Easter as we don't have a service here this year!)*

Visiting for Easter

For those looking to experience a traditional Sussex Easter, St Mary the Virgin provides a unique blend of "Living History" and spiritual renewal. Whether you are drawn by the sensitive 19th-century restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott or the ancient resonance of the 13th-century tower, the church remains a "spiritual powerhouse" for the village. *(Do visit the church to find out more!)*

Easter is considered the most important festival in the Christian calendar because it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. For Christians, this event is not just a historical commemoration but the "cornerstone" and "heartbeat" of their entire faith. *(Very true!)*

The Symbolism of the Season

While secular traditions like eggs and bunnies are popular, they carry religious meaning for many Christians:

- **Easter Eggs:** These represent the sealed tomb of Jesus; when cracked, they symbolise new life breaking forth.
- **Liturgical Colours:** Churches often transition from purple, representing penance and royalty, during Lent to white and gold on Easter Sunday to represent purity, light, and the glory of the resurrection."

This was a deliberate investigation into asking AI to write articles. I think you can tell that it was computer speak rather than my words! However, it was interesting to see how much information Google could find regarding our church.

Whilst I'm writing, I'm going to publicise our annual Bluebell Walk. This year it starts from Clapham Church at 2pm on Sunday 26th April, followed by tea and cake in the church. A suggested donation of £5 per adult. Dogs on leads and children are welcome. It is a chance to see the beautiful bluebells in Clapham woods in areas that are not normally open to the public. The walk will be led by Clem Somerset. To register your interest, please email Kath at hutchinson997@btinternet.com

Also coming up is a Barn Dance Ceilidh in aid of our three churches at Holt Farm Barn, on Sunday 19th July. Entry from 1pm, BBQ will be cooking, then dancing from 2:30 till 5:30pm. Bring your friends. Tickets are £20 per adult, children are free. Please email fcparndance@gmail.com to request more details and register your interest.

With best wishes for a very happy Easter,

Maggie Somerset

Church Warden, St Mary the Virgin, Clapham