



THE HARDHAM WALL PAINTINGS

While researching my book *Slow Sussex*, one of many surprises was the number of churches with medieval wall paintings intact. That these anonymous works of art have survived is often due to zealous covering over in subsequent centuries, which meant once they were again revealed they reappeared remarkably fresh. Southwest of Pulborough and well hidden on a loop of road away from the A29, Hardham's modest-looking church is not the sort of place you'd chance across. Supposedly built from recycled Roman brick and tiles from a nearby military site, this Saxon building has the earliest near-complete set of medieval wall paintings of any English church. Dating from around 1100 but covered up some time after until rediscovery in 1866, the depictions include the Torments of Hell on the west wall, the Nativity on the south wall and the Flight into Egypt on the north wall. Clearest of all are the strangely Picasso-esque Adam and Eve on the west wall of the chancel. If the fresco-seeking bug bites you, Clayton church has an impressive set, dating from the 11th century, and there's more at the tiny, remote Norman church at Coombes, in a wonderful, sloping churchyard above Church Farm near Lancing.

Photos: Tim Locke

More Sussex pleasures in Tim Locke's *Slow Sussex*, Guide Book of the Year Finalist in British Press Awards (£14.99 from Skylark, Lewes Tourist Information Centre and Barbican House). Visit facebook.com/slowsussex for details of walks he's doing.