Today being Good Friday I thought some interesting facts about Easter would be not only appropriate, but entertaining, educational and life-enhancing.

**Hot Cross Buns** First eaten in the 18th Century, the cross on the top reminds us of the Cross of Jesus, and they are meant to be eaten on Good Friday. We now eat them all the year round because they’re so nice: it would be convenient to say that they take the cross off them outside of Easter season but it appears that the cross remains all year round as well.

**Easter Eggs** The custom of giving eggs at Easter celebrates new life. For Christians the egg is a symbol of Jesus' resurrection, as when they are cracked open they stand for the empty tomb, but eggs had been used in festivals for a long time before Jesus. Egg Jarping is a popular activity that takes place on Easter Day, a game with eggs a bit like conkers, with players tapping their opponents' eggs until one breaks. The winner goes through to the next round, and so on until there is only one egg left unbroken. A good hit by a jarper is called a "dunch". The game is popular in County Durham, where people should really get out a bit more don’t you think?

**Easter Bunny** Rabbits have been associated with springtime since ancient times – a symbol of fertility and the rebirth of nature following winter. Is it me or has the Easter Bunny recently become much more of a thing? And not in a good way. Just watch the film ‘Hop’. Actually don’t. Particularly if you have anger issues or don’t appreciate the less subtle elements of American Kid Culture.

**How did Easter get its name?** One belief is that Easter got its name from the Goddess of Spring called Eostre. In Europe, Eostre was honoured as the bringer of spring, and the month of April got named after her (Eostremonath) which then turned into Easter, and hijacked by the church to celebrate Christ’s resurrection: the central Christian festival, although Christmas gets more air time because of all the presents and the fact that there’s more of a story to tell. Although now we have the Easter Bunny maybe that will all change…

**Why does Easter move?** Easter always falls on the first Sunday following the full Moon (the Paschal Full Moon) after 21 March. If the Full Moon falls on a Sunday then Easter is the next Sunday. This is mostly to wind up teachers who have to juggle odd-length terms each year, and to give people something to talk about other than the weather (‘isn’t Easter early this year?’).

The question that always bugged me as a child was why Good Friday was so called. Surely the day commemorating Jesus’ death should be called Sad Friday? In Germany this is the case – over there it is called Karfreitag (Sorrowful Friday). Some think Good is a derivative of God, others say that it is good as in holy, but the most probable reason is the most theological. It is good because it is Jesus’ death that makes a way for us to be forgiven of our sins and brought back into relationship with God. This was the good that John Newton sang about in the hymn Amazing Grace: ‘Amazing grace how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found; was blind but now I see.’

Now that’s good!