

- 1 In 1863, the “Football Association” was founded, to set out clear rules for the game and to distinguish it from rugby football and other similar games. With the foundation of the Football Association, the game began to be called “association” or “**assoc**”, giving the word “soccer”, which at first was a slang word.
- 2 In May each year the Cup Final is held at Wembley. After the First World War it became a tradition for community singing to take place at the Football Cup Final at Wembley. King George V (*the fifth*) suggested that a hymn be included, and “*Abide with me*” was chosen. It is still sung before the Cup Final every May.
- 3 The words were written by Henry Lyte in the fishing village of Brixham in Devon, where he had been the vicar since the age of 30. His words are particularly touching because he wrote them whilst dying of T.B. - tuberculosis.
- 4 On the 4th September 1847 he said goodbye to the congregation of his church. He had been given early retirement because of his chronic health. In his last sermon he preached about the time when two disciples were walking along a road towards a village called Emmaus. Jesus had been killed a few days before, but now he joins them and walks beside them. He is risen from the dead. At last they recognise him and say to him: “*Stay with us. It is nearly evening.*”
- 5 Henry Lyte took this theme and wrote his hymn as he walked by the sea. He heard the ebb and flow of the tide and, for the last time there, he watched the sun set. The following day he was to go abroad on the advice of his doctor, who had told him that in a drier climate he might live a little longer.
- 6 And so he wrote “*Abide with me*” (meaning “stay with me”), “it is fast becoming evening.” As he wrote his words, Henry Lyte also thought of his own life coming to a swift end. No earthly helpers or comforts could make much difference to him.
- 7 2 months later, on his way to sunny Italy, he died in Nice, France. His last words were “*Peace, joy,*” as he pointed his hand towards the sky.
- 8 The words of his hymn we’ll make our prayer today. We can use our imagination and place ourselves on the seashore as the sun is setting. We listen to the words of his hymn as the prayer of this sick man who knew he was at the “evening” of his life, about to die from tuberculosis - but at peace with himself:
- 9 **Abide with me,
fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens,
Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail,
and comforts flee,
help of the helpless,
O abide with me.**
- 10 **Swift to its close
ebbs out life’s little day;
earth’s joys grow dim,
its glories pass away;
change and decay
in all around I see;
O thou who changest not,
abide with me.**
- 11 **I need thy presence
every passing hour;
what but thy grace
can foil the tempter’s power?
Who like thyself
my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine,
O abide with me.**

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- 12 I fear no foe with thee
 at hand to bless;
 ills have no weight
 and tears no bitterness.
 Where is death's sting?
 Where, grave, thy victory?
 I triumph still,
 if thou abide with me.
- 13 Hold thou thy Cross
 before my closing eyes;
 shine through the gloom,
 and point me to the skies;
 heaven's morning breaks,
 and earth's vain shadows flee:
 in life, in death,
 O Lord, abide with me.



-  See also 12 June re the banning of football.
-  "Emmaus" is pronounced "Im-ay-uss".
-  Parts of the first 2 verses are based on words at the end of St Luke's gospel, chapter 24. Two disciples were disillusioned because Jesus had been killed. As they walk along the road towards Emmaus, just outside Jerusalem, Jesus himself joins them and walks with them. At first they don't recognise him. "It is evening, and the day is almost over," they said to him. "Come and stay with us."
-  The words in the 4th verse - "Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?" - are a quote from St Paul: 1 Cor 15⁵⁵. This hymn is often chosen to be sung at funerals.
-  Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) also wrote the words of the hymn, "Praise my soul, the king of heaven".
-  Arthur Caiger had led community singing on Armistice Day, 11/11/1918, and he also led the community singing for the Cup Final, including songs that were sung during the war.
-  King George V was the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II.
-  'Abide with me' was the favourite hymn of the Indian leader Ghandi, who was a Hindu. The hymn is still played on India's Republic Day, as the sun goes down.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:

www.prayingeachday.org