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Nautical Memories

by Revd Clifford Curry

As some will recall I used the picture below in the online service for Oct 11th and it was suggested I shared it with E-Read.



The statue commemorates the hymn “Abide with me”. The author was the Revd. Henry Francis Lyte who served the parish church in Brixham for 25 years refusing all promotion. It stands on the quayside in the harbour on the South Devon coast. It is placed on the site of the boatyards where the Brixham Trawlers were built in the days of sail.

Henry suffered from poor health for many years. Much loved and revered by his humble congregation of fisher folk, he always hoped ‘to leave behind something that would live to the glory of God’. Surely that hope was fulfilled in the hymn now commemorated in our statue. It was written the evening after he preached his last sermon in 1847, before leaving to spend the winter in Italy, hoping to revive his failing health. It was not to be. Aged 54 he passed on a few months later in Naples where he is buried.

The statue depicts a stormy situation needing two men to hold the helm in rough seas, when normally one man did the job easily. The man in the cap is probably the skipper, and the young man assisting him is, for me, our Lord. The caption on the base reads “abide with me fast falls the eventide, the darkness deepens Lord with me abide”. I will not be alone in having had a sense of the Lord having been with me at the helm seeing me safe into harbour on a dark night in a rising wind. For any mariner a rocky coast such as this can be a scary place to be in a rising south westerly gale, as it threatens to drive ashore the ill prepared.

Swedenborg writes - [Seamen are more devout in their morning and evening prayers and hymns than landsmen, because they trust more in the Divine Providence.](#)

- *Doctrine of charity* 170

In Henry's day the prosperity of the whole town and of his congregation was dependant on the fishing success of the fleet of sailing trawlers. The one in the photo that I took from the deck of my boat in 2019, is one of only a few remaining still sailing and capturing the world in which “Abide with me” was penned.

