

DON STEBBINGS (1951-2017)

Born and brought up in Cambridge, Don Stebbings began to work for the University of Cambridge as a deputy custodian at the Arts School. In October 1985, he moved to become Chief Custodian of the Faculty of Divinity, a post he held for thirty years until his retirement on 30 September 2015. Half that period was caring for the Faculty at the old building in St John's Street and from 2000 at the new premises on the Sidgwick site.

Don was a lively presence, well-known for his jokes and amusing sayings. Even the 'old ones' were still funny when he repeated them for he possessed great 'comic timing'. Generations of students entering the Faculty were greeted with warmth and humour by Don and he became an important figure in their experience of Cambridge life. He defused the tension and stress, from the day of arrival to the worries of 'Finals'. He came to be appreciated by summer students and casual visitors as well as those who worked and studied in the Faculty.

Underneath the joking exterior, he was also a sensitive man who comforted and encouraged many a student in trouble, whether worried about exams or feeling depressed. His willingness to support others was part of his service in bringing the Faculty together and he helped make it a place to belong not just to work. Whilst he showed enormous commitment to the smooth running and the maintenance of the building, for him the Faculty was more significantly the people within it. He never wavered in his commitment and was faithful in all aspects of his role right up to the end of his tenure.

Don much enjoyed the early part of his retirement but sadly in February 2017 he was diagnosed with cancer. He continued his daily routine and remained as cheerful as before, not ever grumbling about his declining health. He died on 10 November 2017 aged 66. He certainly did not realise how much he would be missed by those who knew him. His years of service and companionship to generations of students and academics in the Faculty of Divinity will long remain in the memory.