

Alan,

in my early time at Edinburgh, I remember walking every morning in the Middle Meadow Walk round 8:30 to get to the School, and often seeing you *cycling* to work. That made me somehow feel happy: it was obviously possible to be the head of the department and still keep a down-to-earth attitude.

This probably sounds odd to you, as a Briton, but I assure you if you had been Italian, you would have been riding a Mercedes rather than a bike and parking on a *no parking* sign (nobody getting you a fine, of course).

Keeping my feet on the ground is what I have learned from you, and I guess it is no small achievement. You enter my Valhalla of teachers, each one having taught me something *more* than the subject he/she was actually teaching.

My favourite quote for what a teacher should be to a pupil – being unable to compose any decent prose myself, you'll have to stick to this – is from a song by Franco Battiato, called *Prospettiva Nevskij*:

*e il mio maestro m'insegnò  
com'è difficile trovare  
l'alba dentro l'imbrunire.*

(then my master taught me  
how hard it is to find  
the dawn inside the dusk.)

I hope someday I will be able to show someone how hard it is to find the dawn inside the dusk.

Arrivederci a presto, e il sole anche di notte.

Claudio