

## OBITUARY

# Donald Daintree 1937–2019

Donald Daintree – Don, as he was known – can be regarded, in the words of former BIALL Honorary President Barbara Tearle, as ‘*the catalyst for founding BIALL*’. The story of the establishment of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) and the significant contribution that Don made to it was explained in Mary Blake’s detailed *History of the Association*.<sup>1</sup> It has been said that BIALL might not have established itself as a force within the library world had it not been for Don’s initiative, light touch and guidance.

Don’s proactive approach to the now legendary workshops on law librarianship in 1968 and 1969 helped to pave the way for the establishment of the Association that we know it today.

As Don himself affectionately wrote in the first issue (published in 1970) of the Association’s new journal, *The Law Librarian*, following the First Workshop on Law Librarianship held at the Russell Hotel, Harrogate in February 1968:

*Maybe it was the feeling of camaraderie, built up around a roaring open fire in the hotel as the snow lay thick and freezing outside, that acted as a stimulus but, while it no doubt contributed, it was more obviously the need felt for an organisation to represent their interests that led this group of some two dozen people to appoint a steering committee to examine the feasibility of establishing an association of law librarians.*<sup>2</sup>

That committee included Wallace Breem, Don Daintree, Betty Moys, Willi Steiner and Derek Way.

To take a step back to 1965/1966, an early starting point in the story of BIALL’s creation can be traced to the Leeds Library School in the College of Commerce where Don was a full-time lecturer. The School was attempting to improve its profile in the library school world. As Mary Blake’s history records, ‘*The head of the School invited colleagues to suggest ways to achieve this and Don proposed short courses in the Bibliography and Librarianship of a chosen subject that would be suitable as refresher or beginners courses. He knew law to be an eminently suitable subject for such a course.*’ Don then compiled a syllabus and approached a number of law librarians to seek help with this and it led to the first Workshop in 1968 as mentioned above. In describing the Workshop, Derek Way paid tribute to Don in his brief article about the event that was published in *The Solicitors’ Journal* saying that, ‘*In all fairness, this account of the ‘Workshop on Law Librarianship’ must close with a tribute to Mr Daintree (of the Leeds School of Librarianship), who organised the event like clockwork.*’<sup>3</sup>

During the second of these workshops held in April 1969, also in Harrogate, BIALL was born and an inaugural meeting of the Association took place. The first AGM, held at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, occurred on 22 September 1969 and although Don was absent from that meeting, the first officers and members of the Executive Committee were elected at the AGM for the 1969/1970 year with Don elected as Chairman of Association. From there Don continued in office for a lengthy period from 1969 until 1975 and so had considerable involvement and influence over the early years of BIALL history.

Don was also a key figure where the early BIALL Annual Conferences were concerned, especially the inaugural event which took place in Liverpool in 1970. The Executive Committee had agreed that a sub-committee would organise the event with Derek Way acting as the local conference organiser and Don arranged the programme and speakers.

As an Association BIALL was particularly concerned with the education and training of law librarians. A handbook which would later become the *Manual of Law Librarianship* was being discussed as a possibility and, alongside this, Don (by then Librarian at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham) helped to lead the way by agreeing to investigate the production of a tape/slide presentation which was then produced by Don, along with Mary Blake, with the intended audience being first year law students and covering basic legal materials. BIALL’s Committee on Co-operation recommended the establishment of a Standing Committee on Training of Law Librarians and Don was included as a member. He became the chair of that committee from 1975 until 1977. However, by that time, Don had left the world of law librarianship. His involvement with BIALL came to a close around that time too. In due course, the award of Life Membership was conferred on Don for his outstanding and distinguished service to the Association.

As the author of this obituary, I did not know Don personally, but others did and I wish to quote directly from their experiences as a way of capturing something of Don’s life, character and personality. Barbara Tearle recalled ‘*his deep, steady voice with a Yorkshire accent, which had an authority to it which underpinned his ability to steer a conciliatory course between differing interests.*’

Christine Miskin, formerly Hon. BIALL Treasurer and Editor of this journal, remembered encountering Don in the late 1960s:

*At that time he was heavily involved in the founding of BIALL and he was instrumental in its establishment, growth and subsequent success.*

I knew nothing about any of this when in late 1968, having completed a law degree, but deciding to become a librarian, I went to Leeds School of Librarianship where I first met Don. In those days the school was partially situated on the top floor of a recently abandoned wool warehouse in Central Leeds. It was excruciatingly awful with the smell of lanolin still hanging around; filthy wooden boards on the floor and absolutely freezing cold. Whilst descending the stairs one day I was accosted by a well-dressed man with a very smart moustache and twinkling eyes who asked me if I was the student with the law degree (an unusual phenomenon in those days).

Our relationship grew from there. Don told me all about the plans to set up an association of law librarians, how they were progressing, and then the establishment of BIALL in April 1969 in Harrogate; a huge achievement.

Don encouraged me to apply for my first job as Law Librarian at Sheffield University and I always regarded him as my mentor. Of course one of my first actions after being appointed was to join BIALL and I subsequently attended the Conference organised by Don and Derek Way in Liverpool in 1970.

Don was a lovely man, very outgoing and happy to interact with anyone he met. He followed my career with interest and I was very sorry when he left law librarianship in 1975. He did indeed shine a guiding light on the early days of the Association, for which we owe him a deep debt of gratitude.

Robert Logan, formerly of the University of Nottingham and the Bodleian Law Library at Oxford and now retired, recalled:

*Don Daintree was BIALL's first Chair. In some ways, it was a strange appointment. Don was not a practising law librarian, he was a Senior Lecturer at Leeds School of Librarianship and later Librarian of Trent Polytechnic (now Nottingham Trent University). But, with his affable manner, direct speaking and innate understanding of how libraries and library organisations really operated, he was ideally placed as a neutral buffer between the*

*vested interests that dominated the early days of BIALL. The views of Inns of Court, law society and academic librarians were often at variance. Law firms did not figure in those early days as partnership law still restricted firms to a maximum of 12 partners. Don was skilled at summarising discussions and getting all to agree on a way forward.*

*His swansong with BIALL was the 1975 Conference at Nottingham University which I organised with considerable input from Don. By coincidence I had become his next door neighbour a month earlier. He continued to serve on the Executive Committee for another year and I valued his company and advice on journeys to those meetings.*

*Don had the knack of getting on with all sorts of characters and it is hard to recall any adverse comments on his style of BIALL stewardship. Don liked to project himself as a plain-speaking Yorkshireman, with some success.*

Although a Yorkshireman, Don had family connections with the South Coast and after a final flourish as Librarian at Roehampton Institute of Higher Education he achieved a long-held ambition of retiring to Eastbourne, East Sussex with his wife Marge and daughter Christine.

Don Daintree died peacefully in Eastbourne on 28 February 2019. He was 82 years old.

In BIALL's fiftieth year it seems most appropriate to remember Don's remarkable place in BIALL's history and to acknowledge the outstanding part he played in the promotion of law librarianship and the training of law librarians.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As has been evident throughout this obituary, I am indebted to those who knew Don for their memories of him; in particular Robert Logan, Christine Miskin and Barbara Tearle. Mary Blake's *History* has been an invaluable resource in compiling this piece.

**David Wills**  
LIM Editor

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Blake, *A History of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians 1969–1999*. (BIALL, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Don Daintree, 'Welcome' (1970) | *The Law Librarian*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Derek J Way, 'Law librarians in Conclave' (1968) | *112 The Solicitors' Journal* 127–128.