Michael completed his PhD at Gonville and Caius College in 1965 a year ahead of me, but our paths never crossed, so it was not until I started teaching here at Trinity that we first met. We had rooms opposite one another in Angel Court and saw each other frequently. Many of Michael's first year students in cell biology went on to Part IB biochemistry and it was soon clear that they had been very well taught, were both curious and highly motivated. On his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1984, the College made him a Title B Fellow which relieved him of teaching responsibilities at a time when, with the discovery of inositol triphosphate as a second messenger in signal transduction, his pioneering work was reaching its golden years.

As a world authority on calcium signalling, he was interested in the role of calcium in memory storage. At nights calcium induces permanent storage and later erases unwanted temporary storage. In Alzheimer's dementia the calcium level is permanently elevated so that all memories are erased from the temporary store. Research had been published suggesting that people severely deficient in Vitamin D were more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's dementia than those who had normal levels. Michael carried out a wide-ranging literature study to identify the possible biochemical pathways by which vitamin D has these effects. The mechanisms he identified are plausible but further clinical trials would be needed to establish whether adequate levels of vitamin D can prevent or treat the disease.

Michael greatly enjoyed playing golf and was a member of the ‘Trinity 4,’ of which the other three Fellows were Eustace Fox, Dennis Marrian and Richard Glauert. Adrian Poole remembers the ease with which he adapted his golf strokes to the cricket field on his welcome appearances for the Fellows XI.

Michael loved this College and was proud to be a Fellow. His outstanding research added lustre to the Fellowship, but above all, it was the warmth of his friendship, his concern for others and his exemplary collegiality that we will all greatly miss.

Dr Alan Weeds, Trinity Teaching Fellow in Biochemistry, 1975–2007.