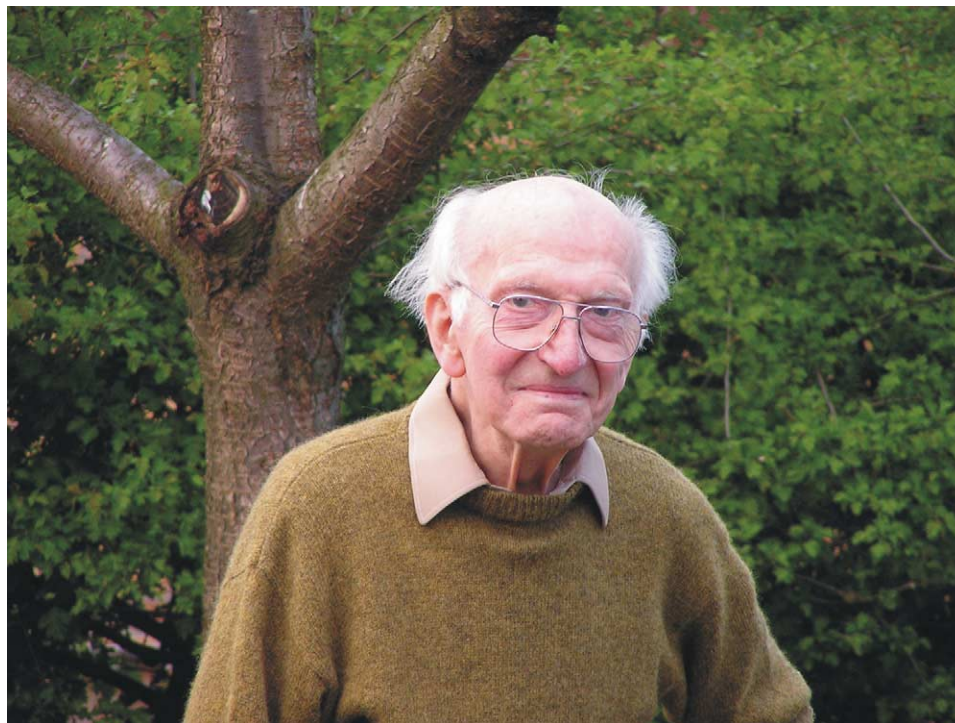


Obituary

Alan Hugh Williams
10 April 1916–4 June 2003

Alan Williams will be remembered by many as a founder member of the Plant Phenolics Group in 1957, in conjunction with, among others, Drs E.C. Bate-Smith and T. Swain of the Low Temperature Laboratory at Cambridge. The original Plant Phenolics Group became the Phytochemical Group in 1964, and subsequently the Phytochemical Society in 1967, and the Phytochemical Society of Europe in 1977. Alan was its first Honorary Secretary from 1962 to 1967.

After obtaining his Oxford B.A. in Chemistry in 1938 with First Class Honours and a B.Sc. (Oxon) in 1939, he took up an appointment at Courtauld before proceeding to war work at the Chemical Defence Research Establishment at Sutton Oak (1940–1945). In the latter year he was awarded his M.A. (Oxon).

In 1947 he was appointed as Organic Chemist at the University of Bristol's Department of Agriculture and Horticulture at Long Ashton Research Station, initially working on mineral deficiencies in plants. He was later temporarily transferred to the newly formed Agri-

cultural Research Council Unit at the Station. Promoted to Principal Scientific Officer in 1956, he became Head of the Station's Plant Constituents Section in 1959, where he undertook studies of the complex phenolic compounds in fruit trees, in which he had become especially interested. His outstanding achievements amongst a total of 37 papers were probably those on 'Dihydrochalcones of *Malus* species' [*J. Chem. Soc.* (1961) (3), 4133–4136] and, with chemical plant taxonomy a rapidly developing topic, 'Dihydrochalcones—their occurrence and use as indicators in chemical plant taxonomy' [*Nature* (1964) 202, 824–825]. The latter was an important contribution to the then much needed revision of the genus *Malus* L. All but one of his papers from 1967 onwards were published in the journal *Phytochemistry*, which became the official organ of the Phytochemical Society of Europe in 1981.

As a person he has been described in letters from former colleagues as 'kind, considerate, courteous, conscientious and a true gentleman'. He lost his wife,

Elaine, to whom he was devoted, in 1973, and, perhaps significantly, there was an 8-year gap in his publications in the 1970s. He leaves a daughter, Everild (who has also worked on plant phenolics), a son, Vaughan, and his friend during the last 30 years of his life, Margaret H. Simpson MBE, former secretary to the Director of

Long Ashton Research Station, who has kindly assisted in the preparation of this obituary.

Robert J.W. Byrd
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