

## **Dr Alan J.L. Phillips, BSc, PhD, 1952-2025**

*Past President of the Mediterranean Phytopathological Union*

It is with sadness and regret that we acknowledge the death of Dr Alan Phillips, on 29 August 2025.

Alan Phillips was born in Victoria, Hong Kong, on 19 March 1952. He attended Wolverhampton Polytechnic, England, graduating in Applied Biology in 1973, was accepted Member of the Institute of Biology in 1975, and obtained his PhD degree in 1980. His thesis was on the colonisers and antagonists of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* sclerotia. He was a lecturer at Wolverhampton Polytechnic and Harper Adams Agricultural College from 1981 to 1983, and an agricultural researcher at the Plant Protection Institute, Pretoria, South Africa from 1983 to 1995. In 1996, he moved to Portugal, where he worked in several institutions, becoming a national authority in mycology. He recently retired from the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Lisbon.

Dr Phillips has had long association with the Mediterranean Phytopathological Union (MPU) and the journal *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*. This began when he became a member of the Union, and expanded as he took responsibilities as a Section Editor for the journal, with oversight for manuscripts on grapevine trunk diseases. He had expanded contributions, with Prof Giuseppe Surico, as Consulting Editor of the journal, where he gave positive and constructive inputs on publication strategies and growth. He was elected President of the MPU from 2011 to 2017, and continued to support the MPU and the journal until his death.

Dr Phillips made enduring contributions to fungal taxonomy and phylogeny, and plant pathology, with particular focus on pathogens associated with woody hosts. His most influential research was on the systematics of *Botryosphaeriaceae*, combining culture-based studies with multi-locus DNA sequencing to clarify genus and species boundaries. His landmark monograph “*The Botryosphaeriaceae: genera and species known from culture*” (2013) provided authoritative phylogenies, diagnostic keys, and taxonomic treatments that standardised identifications across 17 genera and more than 100 species. He championed integrated phylogenetic and morpho-



logical approaches, emphasizing that morphology alone was often inadequate for defining species. This perspective guided his extensive revisions of *Botryosphaeriaceae* and *Diaporthe*, refining species concepts that remain fundamental to modern mycology. Much of his research addressed grapevine trunk diseases, but also pathogens of other woody hosts, describing new taxa and host associations, and advancing understanding of disease management. He also contributed to higher-level fungal classification and diversity, redefining families within *Botryosphaerales*, participating in compendia including the series Outline of Fungi and Fungus-like Taxa. His research has provided phylogenetic and nomenclatural foundation for modern research on these ecologically and economically significant fungi. He became particu-



Dr Alan Phillips always listened discreetly, and made colleagues feel understood and respected. He evoked gratitude and affection, and is remembered for his personable, courteous, and respectful interactions, and a legacy of major contributions to fungal taxonomy, phytopathology, and grapevine disease research. This also included constructive mentorship, and enduring collegial spirit with his colleagues and friends.

The legacy of Dr Alan Phillips includes his contributions in collegial mentorship, his personal achievements in knowledge development, and his leadership in plant pathology.

*Artur Alves,  
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larly recognised as a Highly Cited Researcher (Plant and Animal Science) for the years 2018 to 2024, reflecting enduring influence and global relevance of his research contributions and leadership.

Dr Phillips will also be remembered for his mentorship and generosity. He guided numerous early-career mycologists and plant pathologists, offering technical expertise, and also patient encouragement and thoughtful advice. He maintained a strong and enduring association with the Center of Excellence in Fungal Research (CEFR), Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand, where he served as a mentor and visiting Professor for many years. His commitment to training and inspiring young mycologists and plant pathologists has left a lasting legacy within the Center, where his guidance has shaped the careers of many young researchers. He was heavily involved in academic activities at CEFR, serving on thesis committees and attending defences, where his meticulous reviewing strengthened student output. His engagement extended beyond formal obligations, as a patient teacher, rigorous researcher, and source of encouragement to all who sought his advice. He continued this mentorship after his retirement, and his last service as an External Committee member for a PhD defence was in May 2025.

Alan Phillips was a gifted photographer, as he expressed his appreciation for nature and people using the lens of his camera. He captured landscapes and everyday life with sensitivity and an artistic eye. Photography was his creative outlet and a pursuit he practised with great dedication; his outputs were sold on professionally, and he often reinvested the proceeds to acquire new equipment to improve his craft. His images, as with his research, reflected patience, precision, and an enduring curiosity.