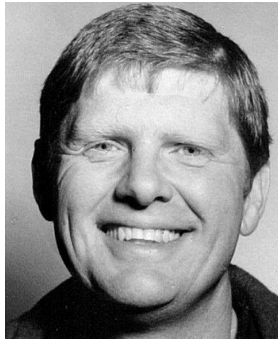


Dr. Alan Critchley



Born in Birmingham, UK, attended school at Handsworth Boy's Technical School, where the local environment encouraged him to become a marine biologist!

Tertiary education was at Portsmouth Polytechnic (now university), where he received a very practical approach to marine biology. Post graduate studies, leading to PhD, continued at Portsmouth, at the Marine Laboratory, Hayling Island, studying the infamous invasive, brown seaweed *Sargassum muticum* under the instruction of Gareth Jones and Bill Farnham.

Following in the footsteps of *Sargassum*, a Royal Society European Post Doctoral Fellowship was awarded for work in The Netherlands.

From 1982 – 2001, Alan climbed the academic ladder, teaching in southern Africa at the universities of KwaZulu Natal, Witwatersrand and Namibia. Initial research studies were based on sub-tropical seaweed ecology and taxonomy. After Europe, it was a real pleasure to study and collect seaweeds from sub-tropical waters! Both out of interest, and funding necessity, a move was made to resource assessment and economic utilisation of seaweed resources such as *Sargassum* and *Gracilaria* (in areas as diverse as saline wastewaters many miles from the sea to coastal, diamond mine pits!). Value addition of the local seaweed resources became increasingly important and led to the valorisation and marketing of the soil amendment product Afrikelp™, using Namibian kelp, in the mid 1980's.

In 2001, the call of business led to a move to Normandy, France, to work for Degussa as Head of the New Raw Materials Laboratory. Responsibilities included improvement of raw materials for carrageenan gel extraction. This was traditionally from Irish Moss harvested locally and also from Canada; but in more recent times, the majority of materials came from cultivation sites in The Philippines, Indonesia and Tanzania. There was much work to be done on raw material production and improvement of cultivation methods. The French harvest of *Laminaria digitata* and *hyperborea* and changes in their population structure (due to scoubidou harvest techniques or general environmental change remain TBD), were also covered for Degussa's alginate factory in Brittany.

In another case of "have seaweed, will travel", the long suffering Critchley family moved again in 2005 to Nova Scotia, Canada where Alan took up the position of Vice President, Research for Acadian Seaplants Limited (ASL). This is a very diverse and challenging portfolio being responsible for research, development and commercialisation of products in all four divisions of the company; viz. Plant Science, Animal Science, Food Science and Specialty Ingredients. This work covers the sustainable harvesting of large quantities of Irish Moss, *Ascophyllum nodosum* and some fucoids, for the production of a wide range of commercial products through drying, milling and extraction processes. In addition, ASL operates the largest on-land site for the cultivation of seaweeds; principally *Chondrus crispus* (or Hana Nori™) for human food with development of other materials for the production of biologically active compounds.

Alan has had a foot in the camps of academia and the commercial seaweed world and hopefully can see the strengths and criticisms of one another from both sides of the divide.