

Macdonald



Reports



McGill's Caribbean Campus

D.J. Donnelly & L. Vyvey

Bellairs Research Institute is Canada's only teaching and research facility in the tropics. Located in Barbados, it plays host to students and scientists from around the world for field courses, workshops and research projects involving both marine and terrestrial environments. Close association is also maintained with several scientists based at the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies.

Who was Bellairs?

Carlyon Wilfroy Bellairs was born March 15, 1871 and died August 22, 1955. He spent much of his early life as a Commander in the British Royal Navy, and followed this career with one in politics. Disillusioned with post-war British politics, Bellairs retired to Barbados and promptly fell in love with the island. He settled in Seabourne House on the Sand-acres estate in Holetown.

In 1951, Commander Bellairs sent a letter to Vincent Massey, chair of the Royal Commission on the Arts and Sciences in Canada, offering his property to a Canadian university for the purpose of research that would benefit Barbados. It is said that the letter was poorly written, and on cheap paper, and therefore, Sir Massey, then Chancellor of the University of Toronto, sent it on to McGill's Principal, Cyril James, saying that this kind of thing was likely to be of more interest to McGill than Toronto. Indeed it was!

The Bellairs Research Institute was founded in 1954. In 1955, Commander Bellairs passed away leaving his estate to the care of McGill University.

The Institute's First Programs

The two major long range programs conceived of by John Lewis, first Bellairs Director in the early years, included: to render a service to Barbados and to the West Indies in fisheries and agriculture and to provide facilities for training in tropical biology for McGill University students.

In explaining the value of the institute, so remote from McGill, Lewis argued that



Tropical Horticulture class, at Redlands with well-known agronomist and Senator, Frances Chandler. June 11, 2009.

training in tropical biology had value for all biologists. He believed that students from temperate climates needed to experience the abundance and diversity of the tropics, where intense competition for resources was evident, and animal activity occurs all year round.

Today, the campus is deeply appreciated by students and researchers alike, not only for its research facilities and proximity to the beach, but also for the opportunities that such a dynamic environment offers for personal growth.

The BITS Semester

The Institute is currently occupied by students from the BITS Summer Program (Barbados Interdisciplinary Tropical Studies), a shared activity of McGill University, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), and the National Conservation Commission (NCC) of Barbados.

An international group of 12 students with diverse backgrounds constitute the first participants in the BITS program. They are there for course work in tropical horticulture, sustainable land use, and tropical food and energy technology. They are also guided by local mentors in group project work on subjects with national importance (nutrition and health, alternative energy).

McGill and UWI students will be exposed to a wide range of agri-food-energy industries and related socio-economic issues.

Intensive course work is integrated with group project work and contributes to the formation of professionals with planning, managing, decision-making, and communication skills. Students enrolled in the program take 3 courses co-taught by Cave Hill and McGill lecturers. They also participate in project work with local mentors. The program addresses a global need for experienced international professionals capable of interacting with various levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Tropical Horticulture

Seeds, cuttings, layering, grafting, post-harvest handling, and environmental effects on crops were some of the many classroom topics covered in the Tropical Horticulture course. Then out of the classroom to experience Barbados horticulture first-hand. The final course activity involves individual presentations by each student on assigned tropical fruit and vegetables.

Two more intensive courses follow Tropical Horticulture Sustainable Land Use, and Tropical Energy and Food Technology. In addition to course activities, students are working in groups of 2-3 with local mentors, on projects important to Barbados.

D.J. Donnelly is a professor in Plant Science and the Director of the BITS program; L. Vyvey is the BITS program assistant. More on the program at www.mcgill.ca/bits

Macdonald eBulletin launched

We've gone green!

Protecting the environment is at the forefront of everything we do at Macdonald. In July, we launched our electronic newsletter, the **Macdonald eBulletin**. This is one way of reducing our carbon footprint while still keeping our alumni and friends up-to-date on developments and news at the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.



We were only able to send the Macdonald eBulletin out to those whose emails we had on file; it is available online at www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/development/ebulletin/.

If you would like to reduce your carbon footprint, please ensure that we have your email address and future Macdonald alumni mailings will be sent to you electronically. The faculty newsletter, **In Focus**, will still be published twice a year and sent to by regular mail. Please contact the Development Office to update your contact information: development.macdonald@mcgill.ca or 514-398-7984.

Mark your calendars

September 15 - December 1, 2009

8th Annual Food for Thought Lecture Series

Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m., Raymond Building R2-045
Macdonald Campus, 21,111 Lakeshore Road, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue
Info: 514-398-7707 or www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/events/fft

This year's Food for Thought series will focus on agriculture and the environment, to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the McGill School of Environment. Lecture details will be posted online as they become available.

September 10, 2009

2nd Bob Pugh Golf Classic

Anderson Links Golf and Country Club, 4175 Anderson Road, Ottawa
Info: Anna Duff at 514-398-7852 or visit our website at www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/development/alumevents/bobpugh/

This year's Classic will raise funds for Dr. William Harold Brittain, Dean at Macdonald from 1934-1955.

October 5 - 7, 2009

2nd Annual McGill Conference on Global Food Security

New Residence Hall, McGill University, 3625 Avenue du Parc
For program info or to register: www.mcgill.ca/globalfoodsecurity

The conference will address the impacts of the recent global financial turmoil on food security in developing countries. The conference will start on Monday, October 5th at 1:00 p.m. followed by a Public Lecture-Panel Discussion (at the Centre Cours Mont Royal) on Monday evening; this session is open to all at no charge. The conference will feature seminars by internationally-renowned experts as well as representatives from countries that are the hardest hit by the food crisis.

October 16-17, 2009

Macdonald Homecoming

For program info: Anna Duff 514-398-7852 or visit our website at www.mcgill.ca/macdonald/development/alumevents/homecoming/

A myriad of events have been planned to welcome alumni back to Mac! For event details, please visit our website.