

News Release



University of the
West of England

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UWE research to seek out wild cocoa in Guyana

Ten young graduates from UWE's Faculty of Applied Sciences will be leaving the UK on 4 July, 1998, to spend ten weeks in Guyana in an initiative to find new types of wild cocoa.

The group co-ordinator, Dr Mark Johnston, has already conducted a number of research projects in Guyana, including work on cocoa growing by Amerindians in the interior. Guyana does not currently produce cocoa commercially, and one of the aims of the project will be to help the country to re-establish its cocoa industry, if this is feasible.

A major source of funding is the UK-based Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate & Confectionery Alliance (BCCCA), who are keen to discover new types of wild cocoa that have a good yield potential, early bearing and are resistant to the most important fungal diseases which affect cocoa. Total worldwide losses of cocoa production to disease may be as high as 30 per cent - perhaps even higher.

After training at the Cocoa Research Unit in Trinidad, the group will begin an exploration of the remote forest areas of Southern Guyana - a largely unmapped region, much of which has not been visited since it was first documented by explorers in the 1930s. As cocoa usually grows near to rivers, the expedition party will travel by boat, specifically on the Essequibo River, living on tinned food and freshly-caught fish. The expedition is being most generously assisted with logistics by the Guyana Defence Force, and the UWE team will also have support from the Guyanese National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI).

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The aim will be to locate and map any wild cocoa trees, and to take samples - leaf material for research, budwood for grafting, seeds for propagation - for establishment in a living germplasm cocoa collection at NARI's Horticultural Research Station.

'The main task will be to get material to the Horticultural Station where further tests can be done,' said Dr Johnston. 'It might take a number of years to discover whether or not the samples are resistant to disease, but if they are, there will be benefits for Guyana and for the worldwide cocoa industry.'

-ENDS-

Editors' Notes:

The Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance (BCCCA) is the UK trade body for cocoa processors and chocolate manufacturers.

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Students go on the cocoa trail

TEN young graduates from the University of the West of England will be leaving tomorrow (Saturday) to spend 10 weeks in Guyana in an initiative to find new types of wild cocoa.

The group co-ordinator Dr Mark Johnston has already conducted a number of research projects in Guyana. Guyana does not currently produce cocoa commercially, and one of the aims of the project will be to help the country to re-establish its cocoa industry.

After training at the Cocoa Research Unit in Trinidad, the group will begin an exploration of the remote forest areas of Southern Guyana - a largely unmapped region, much of which has not been visited since it was first documented by explorers in the 1930s.

"The main task will be to get material to the horticultural station where further tests can be done," said Dr Johnston. "But it might take a number of years to discover whether or not the samples are resistant to disease."

Bristol Evening Post

Campus team's cocoa project

A GROUP of graduates from the University of the West of England will travel to Guyana on Saturday to look for new types of wild cocoa.

The team of 10 graduates from the faculty of applied sciences will spend 10 weeks on the project.

One of the aims of the scheme is to help the country to re-establish its cocoa industry.

The group will try to find and map any wild cocoa trees and to take samples for the Guyanese National Agricultural Research Institute's (NARI) Horticultural Research Station.

The team is being co-ordinated by Dr Mark Johnston, who has already carried out a number of research projects in Guyana.

It will train at the Cocoa Research Unit in Trinidad before exploring the remote forest areas of Southern Guyana.

Much of the region has not been visited since it was first documented by explorers in the 1930s.

The UK-based Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance (BCCCA) is providing a major source of funding for the project.

Dr Johnston said: "The main task will be to get material to the Horticultural Station where further tests can be done."

"It might take a number of years to discover whether or not the samples are resistant to disease, but if they are, there will be benefits for Guyana and for the world-wide cocoa industry."

Cemetery's gates may stay open

THE gates of Mangotsfield Cemetery are set to be left open on summer weekends despite fears of vandalism.

Former Kingswood Borough Council, which used to run the cemetery, kept the gates closed at weekends, when staff were not on duty.

South Gloucestershire Council decided to leave gates open on Saturdays and Sundays so vehicles could go in

Ban on undersize fruit prompt



FREE PEAC

THOUSANDS of tiny peaches are being given away in Bristol supermarkets — because European bureaucrats have banned them from being put on sale.

Asda has been told it cannot sell the fruits because of a ruling from Brussels.

The store, which has branches in Patchway, Bedminster, Longwell Green and Whitchurch, says it intends to give them away to children.

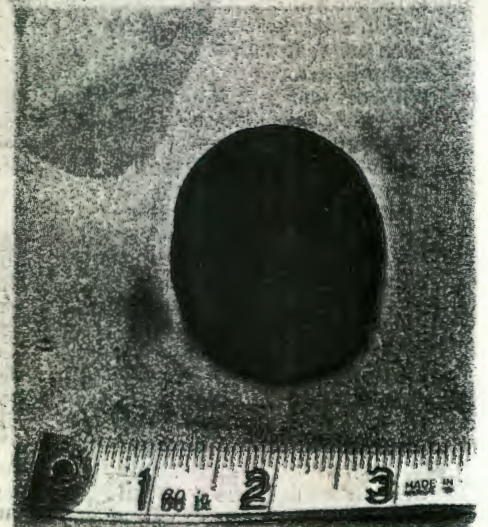
More than 100,000 little peaches will be distributed across the country on Saturday.

The fruit had initially been ordered by Asda as part of a promotion for children's healthy food.

But from midnight on June 30 it became illegal to sell the smallest 'D-size' peaches, measuring 51mm to 56mm across.

The ban, which will not be lifted until next spring, is imposed annually by the European Commission to protect Italian peach growers.

There was a glut of the fruit in the 1980s and over-production sent prices tumbling. Asda produce director John Cleland says the EU directive is on a



par with moves to straighten bananas and change the ingredients of UK infl chocolate.

Mr Cleland said he was happy to commit a "breach of the peach" to make the point.

He said that after a poor harvest, growers and stores needed to be able to sell as much fruit as possible to meet

Centre poo idea floated