



Friends of Dartmouth Park Press Release

The Friends of Dartmouth Park are delighted to announce that the 10th Earl of Dartmouth, William Dartmouth, has agreed to become Patron of the Friends' Group.

The final stage of the restoration project development work for Dartmouth Park is nearing completion and the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will be submitted at the end of April. The HLF assessment will be available in September.

The Friends are a group of local people who want to see the park restored to its former glory and help to guide its long term development and maintenance. We are also producing a Social History of the Park which will be displayed in the new pavilion.

The Friends' Group are delighted to announce that the 10th Earl of Dartmouth, William Dartmouth, has agreed to become Patron of the Friends of Dartmouth Park.

The Dartmouth family has a long association with West Bromwich, which began in 1705 when William Legge, the 1st Earl of Dartmouth, bought Priory House and the surrounding estate for a country residence. Priory House was replaced with Sandwell Hall, and Sandwell Park Farm was built to provide food for the Hall. West Bromwich and Sandwell Valley at that time must have been a perfect rural retreat for a noble family, as the 1st Earl was Lord Privy Seal to Queen Anne.

The 2nd Earl and the 3rd Earl spent a lot of time on their Sandwell Estate, and the 4th Earl's children were all born at Sandwell Hall, but the mills and foundries of the Black Country began to spread into the green acres of the Sandwell Valley, and in the early 1850s the 4th Earl, recently widowed, moved with his family to his Patshull Estate, near Wolverhampton.

The 5th Earl, affectionately known by the locals as 'Billy My Lord', still took a great interest in his Sandwell Estate, and when he was approached by Alderman Reuben Farley to provide land from the estate for 'a people's park' he readily agreed and gave 56 acres on a 99 year lease at a nominal rent of £1 per year. The 5th Earl officially opened Dartmouth Park on 3 June 1878 to great rejoicing at an event attended by over 40,000 people, and it was soon extended by another 9.5 acres to include the boating pool. The 6th Earl gave the freehold to the people of West Bromwich and this was officially handed over by the then Prince of Wales in 1923.

The 10th Earl, born on the 23 September 1949, the son of Gerald Humphrey Legge and Raine McCorquodale, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He is a graduate of Harvard Business School and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He succeeded to his title on the 14 December 1997. William Dartmouth says:

“I am delighted to learn of the plans for the restoration of Dartmouth Park, and wish you every success with the application for Heritage Lottery Funding.

It gives me great pleasure to accept the invitation to become Patron of the Friends of Dartmouth Park and I will follow the progress of the project with much interest.”



Contact details:

Carol Hartill, Secretary of the Friends of Dartmouth Park
c/o New Street Lodge, Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, B71 4AS
Tel: 0121 588 4747 or Mobile 07809351621
e-mail: carolh.fodp@btinternet.com