

10 SEPTEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

LANDICAN CEMETERY – PETITION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report has been prepared in response to a petition with 871 signatures requesting that the Council stop removing grave owners memorials in lawn sections of the cemetery.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The grave owned by the lead petitioner in Landican cemetery in a section designated as a lawn section and which has approximately 450 graves. 'Lawn management' of cemeteries was introduced approximately 30 years ago to improve maintenance and to assist with access to graves by modern equipment used for grave digging. Each grave space is available for either 2 or 3 internments and access is required across existing graves to excavate or reopen graves for further burials. The lawn management system also permits maintenance by larger mowers providing a more uniform and accessible area for all visitors.

2.2 Lawn management is used nationally in public cemeteries and in many church cemeteries. All sections opened in the last 20 years in Wirral cemeteries have been as lawn sections and the new section presently being developed at the southern end of Landican Cemetery is planned as a lawn section.

2.3 The rules and regulations for Wirral's cemeteries include a requirement that on lawn grave sections no kerbs or other materials are placed on a grave. Memorials are placed at the head of the grave which includes a reasonable planting area (18" wide border) that families and friends can use to put personal items or plants in memorial of their loved ones. The rest of the grave is laid to lawn between the rows of headstones and borders.

2.4 The regulations have been in place for many years and have been the subject of previous discussions by Council Committees. The last occasion was on 9th March 1999 when a similar petition was considered by Leisure Services Committee and it was again resolved that the management of the new burial sections in Wirral cemeteries as lawn sections be confirmed (Minutes 88 refers).

3.0 PRESENT SITUATION

3.1 When a new grave is purchased the purchaser is required to complete an application form which clearly states that it is in a lawn grave section, no kerbs are allowed and planting is restricted to the top 18" wide border (see Appendix 1).

3.2 This is also confirmed in a covering letter to the new grave owner when a Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial is sent to them (see Appendix 2).

3.3 The majority of grave owners understand and appreciate the practical problems involved. The real need of bereaved relatives to tend a grave is recognised and the cemetery staff involved try to be as sensitive as possible in interpreting the requirements for a lawn section.

3.4 In the particular lawn section involved 38 of the 450 grave owners had over a period of time extended their planting area to the full length of the grave. All 38 grave owners who had extended the planting area received a letter requesting removal. The majority of grave owners have since responded and returned the grave to lawn.

3.5 If the lawn management system could not be retained there would be a significant increase in the cost of managing the cemetery, and there would be little or no access for machinery particularly to re-open graves.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The cost of maintaining Wirral cemeteries is £931,600. If the system of lawn management was discontinued then this would, overtime, as more burials were undertaken, increase the costs by at least £700,000 pre annum.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are none arising from this report.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The lawn grave section assists in providing access to graves for all members of the community.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Landican cemetery is in Upton ward.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 There are none arising from this report.

14.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 The Council's regulations designating sections of its cemeteries as lawn grave sections be confirmed.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Roger Calvert who can be contacted on 691 4701.

WIRRAL

_____ Cemetery

Application for the purchase of a Private Grave

Date of Interment _____ Time _____

Division _____ Class _____ Depth _____

Name of Deceased _____

Age _____ Occupation _____

Address _____

Funeral Director _____

Minister _____

Service at _____ Church _____

Coffin Size _____

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A LAWN GRAVE. NO KERBS ARE ALLOWED
AND PLANTING IS RESTRICTED TO TOP 18".
ANY FENCING ETC. PUT ON THIS GRAVE WILL
BE REMOVED.**

Full Name of Owner _____

Occupation _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Grave Reg.	
Burial Reg.	
Index	
Computer	

_____ Signature of Owner

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To

date

Dear

This letter explains the conditions applicable when a grave is purchased.

The popular belief that the land itself is purchased is incorrect – the purchaser acquires a right of burial in the grave but the land and the responsibility for management remains with the Council.

Following an interment, the ground will continue to settle for a few months but as soon as practicable it will be levelled, grassed over and maintained by the Council.

To enable the sections to be maintained, relatives must restrict the planting and the placing of vases to an 18 inch border at the head of the grave.

Memorials, subject to approval by the Council, may be erected at the head of the grave, but the marking of the grave, for example, by plastic railing, fencing, concrete edging or the placing of loose materials e.g. chippings, is not permitted.

The co-operation of grave owners and relatives is requested when the lawned area of their grave is needed for the temporary placing of earth when an adjoining grave is re-opened. The grave will be carefully reinstated afterwards and any planting restored.

A month after the new grave is purchased, you will receive a document called the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial. This 'Grave Deed' reserves the owner the right of burial in the grave specified. Where it is required for the grant to be transferred to another person, the Council should be notified in writing so that a transfer of ownership may be arranged. This will avoid difficulties if the grave has to be re-opened or an inscription added to any memorial.

If you require any further guidance on cemetery matters, please do not hesitate to contact the Cemeteries Office within Landican Cemetery.

Yours sincerely

L Parkes
Cemeteries & Crematorium Registrar

