

Earlham Cemetery – The Importance of a ‘No Dogs’ Policy

This document is in response to the reply from Chris Eardley (dated 4th April 2018) about our concerns about the opening of the St. Thomas' Road gate into Earlham Cemetery, without consultation with our group, local residents or councillors.

The reply contained the paragraph:

"With regard to the issue of dogs, the current rules and regulations are being updated and revised. As part of this process the role and relevance of historic bylaws has to be considered alongside the council's PSPO regarding dog fouling and the resources available to the council to monitor and manage dog issues. New signage and instructions for dog owners will be provided following completion of these discussions."

This appears to raise the possibility that Norwich City Council might allow dogs in Earlham Cemetery. We are completely opposed to this.

Earlham Cemetery (along with the Rosary Cemetery) is the only dog-free area of green space in Norwich.

It is an important County Wildlife site and has been described as the best area of green space for wildlife within the ring road.

Earlham Cemetery has a unique, tranquil character that is restful and appropriate to a cemetery and its use as a place of quiet contemplation.

This peace and tranquillity is appreciated by cemetery visitors. In an increasingly busy and noisy city, these peaceful areas of green space are very important for people's mental and physical health.

Allowing dogs would completely alter the character of the Cemetery.

Dog walking in the Cemetery would lead to extra use of soft paths that are unsuitable for heavy footfall. Heavily used paths can become muddy and wider and this will damage the edges of paths and their flora, to the detriment of Cemetery wildlife.

It would be impossible to enforce a policy of keeping dogs on leads and this would inevitably lead to dogs running out of control, leading to disturbance to wildlife.

Allowing dogs in the Cemetery would lead to fouling, including on paths and graves, and it is likely that bags of dog mess would be discarded as litter.

Dogs off the lead could also disturb legitimate users of the Cemetery, visiting graves of their loved ones.

A number of people are nervous around dogs and their enjoyment of the Cemetery would be affected, to the point where they may feel unable to visit and attend graves.

Allowing dogs in Earlham Cemetery is not going to generate any revenue for Norwich City Council. Adverse publicity about dogs fouling graves could actually lead to a reduction in people using the Cemetery for burials, and hence a loss of Council income.

There is also a 'no dogs' policy in the Memorial Gardens next to Earlham Crematorium. Allowing dogs in the rest of the Cemetery is going to cause confusion to visitors and a ban on dogs in the Memorial Garden alone will be difficult to enforce.

The existing ban on dogs in the Cemetery has been in place since 1978. The minutes of the Norwich District Council Health Committee for 12th April 1978 record that:

- There had been complaints from the public that a number of graves had been soiled by dogs exercised in Earlham & Rosary Cemeteries
- Existing regulations provided that dogs should be held securely on a leash while in the Cemeteries but that this requirement was frequently disregarded by people using the Cemeteries to exercise their dogs.
- There were not enough staff in the Cemeteries to apprehend the majority of culprits.

It was resolved to amend the regulations to "No dogs will be allowed within the Cemeteries with the exception of dogs used by staff for security reasons".

It should be noted that some members of the public are breaking the current rules.

Large dogs are sometimes seen running off the lead in parts of Earlham Cemetery. There have also been instances of dog fouling, including one occasion when a woman allowed her small dog to urinate on a memorial plaque in the Memorial Gardens, during one of our group's monthly walks. This dog was on a lead – so having dogs on leads would not solve the problem.

Current problems arise partly because there isn't any "No Dogs" sign on the gates by the Cemetery Office and numbers of dog walkers has increased since the St. Thomas' Road gate was opened, without any "No Dogs" sign. This lack of signs needs to be remedied as soon as possible. Norwich City Council should also investigate a system of dog wardens, voluntary and part-time if necessary.

However, removing the "no dogs" rule will make these incidents much more common as more dog walkers are attracted to the Cemetery.

The lack of resources to monitor and manage dog issues does not mean that rules should be relaxed, any more than a shortage of police officers should lead to the acceptance of theft or vandalism.

Friends of Earlham Cemetery
11th April 2018.