

Article in West Sussex Gazette – Wednesday 30th August 2006

'Enough is enough' say residents as wreckers continue to hit cemetery

Acts of vandalism at Durrington Cemetery 'cannot continue'.

This was the message from The Findon Valley Society to the cemetery's registrar, Ian Rudkin, following more vandalism at the graveyard.

And the group are again asking that the cemetery gates be locked in the evening following the latest damage to tomb stones and the resulting upset caused to families.

The recent destruction is the latest in a series of ongoing problems at the cemetery; in November last year 70 memorials were damaged by vandals.

In a letter to the registrar the vice-chairman of the Findon Valley Society David Goncalves outlined the group's concerns.

He said: "On behalf of the Findon Valley Society and 1,800 plus households in Findon Valley, we propose the gates are locked from dusk to dawn.

"It works for so many other cemeteries in and around Sussex so let's follow by example and stop this misery and heartache.

"Many other cemeteries have opening hours which vary for summer and winter.

"Newhaven Cemetery opens from 7am – 4pm during the winter months and 7am – 8.30pm during summer.

"This prevents vandals from entering these sacred places and causing such devastating damage.

"Furthermore, we should not be encouraging people to visit these places in the middle of the night, so why leave it open?"

Mr Goncalves said the police had told him that dog handlers liked to have one gate open at the cemetery so they can exercise their dogs and that this also acted as a deterrent to would-be vandals.

He added that registrar Ian Rudkin has said he is aiming to increase the height of the cemetery fence, which it is argued, is so low that vandals could get in even if the gates were locked.

Although the Findon Valley Society welcomed the proposal of a higher fence, Mr Goncalves maintained that the solution to the misery caused to loved-ones of having their family's gravestones damaged was to lock all the gates.

Worthing crime prevention officer John Baines said: "We are advising Worthing Borough Council about security on the site.

"Any decision about closing gates is a decision for the cemetery manager.

"Ian Rudkin is on leave at the moment and I don't feel it is appropriate to discuss anything without his involvement."