

## **Gone but Not Forgotten** **With Jo Gosney and Eillen O'Connell**

On 19 February, a capacity audience attended at the Farnborough Community Centre to hear presentations on the history of the funeral chapel in the Victoria Road cemetery and how the people buried in the cemetery have impacted on the town's history.



Jo Gosney explained that the cemetery opened up in 1859 and was required because the small churchyard at St Peter's had no more space. The local Burial Board borrowed £700 from the Government which covered the cost of the building work and the surrounding landscaping. The chapel has not been altered since construction and many of the nearby trees survive from the original planting. We are fortunate

to have copies of the accounts which tell us of the local traders who were involved, many of whom are now buried close by. The cemetery grounds were extended in 1900. Among notable residents buried there are Thomas Longman, the publisher who built Farnborough Hill; Edward Greene who founded three schools on the border with Cove; William Swann who built the Swan Inn; Tredenham Herbert Carlyon who lived at Farnborough Place and built many properties in South Farnborough; Redshirt Matthews, the fairground owner who became famous for his fairground gallopers; the Bartletts who were Blacksmiths in Farnborough Street; William and Mary Ray who built Farnborough Street Methodist Chapel; William Sherwin, JP, of Farnborough Grange; and William Knell who built Knellwood. For those interested in history, a walk around the cemetery would prove very informative.

When the Columbarium project is complete the Chapel will be assured of a future. The grounds will also form a very acceptable amenity open space in the centre of a densely developed residential area.

After a break for refreshments which included many donated homemade cakes, the second presentation, highlighting a number of the Empress Eugenie's staff buried there, was given by Eileen O'Connell.

From a French treasurer, Belgian housekeeper and French maid to an English policeman, butler and coachman who all accompanied the Empress from Chislehurst to Farnborough Hill, a number of interesting individuals buried in the cemetery played an essential part in the imperial household, as well as on the

estate and in the local community based around Highgate Lane and Farnborough Street (Ship Lane).

Without her land stewards and outdoor staff, the Empress would not have been able to run the estate. The McLaurin brothers and Edward Lee were each in turn her stewards, living in Oriel Cottage. The supplier and mechanic of her famous Renault motor car, Frederick Joyce, held her Imperial Warrant, and was an ex officio member of the estate.

One particularly tragic story that Eileen related concerned William Beck, who, having spent all his life as an agricultural labourer on the estate, was given the task of engine driver.

Four pieces of equipment, including a sawmill and pump, were operated from one engine or power source by long belts. Beck was asked to change the pump for the saw mill but, instead of switching off the power source, he climbed a ladder and leaned over it to hang up the belt. The cuffs of his smock got caught on a



key and dragged him up. When the material tore he was thrown to the floor. He died two days later of serious internal injuries, at the age of 70.

Many of the headstones of people related to the imperial household survive but where they no longer exist we do know exactly where they were buried.

Both Jo and Eileen gave fascinating presentations, shining a light of some of key individuals in the story of Farnborough. The event, which was covered in the *Farnborough News & Mail*, raised a stunning £522.