

Rhinefield Probus visit Gurkha **museum on 20 Nov 2014**

2015 sees the 200th anniversary from the time that the British Army first recruited Gurkha soldiers into its ranks.

This forthcoming anniversary recently prompted member John Cropp to organise a group of 30 members and partners from the Club to pay a visit to the fascinating Gurkha Museum in Winchester (www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk).

The Gurkha Museum at Winchester tells the moving and unique story of Gurkha service to the British Crown and its people for nearly 200 years. Gurkha ‘graves’ are spread across the face of the earth in nearly every country in which Britain has fought – silent testament to Gurkha loyalty and courage.

Prior to touring the museum the group, including as a guest of a member the wife of a former Commandant of the Queens Gurkha Engineers who lives in the Forest (but was sadly unwell on the day of the visit), were given a fascinating talk the Museum’s curator. Though not ex-military man the Curator, Mr Mr Gavin Edgerley-Harris (a former solicitor) gave an excellent talk summarising the 200 years of the Gurkas.

The story of the service of Gurkhas began in 1815 with the end of the Nepal Wars between the British East India Company and the warlike Nepalese. As a result of a unique Treaty between The Honourable East India Company and Nepal which enabled Nepalese citizens to serve in the Armies of ‘John Company’ in India – the Gurkha tradition began, a legacy which survives to this day.

The name “Gurkha”, or “Goorkha” as one ‘elite’ regiment like to use, deriving from the hill town of Gorkha from which the Nepalese kingdom has grown; this

It was particularly fascinating for the group to learn of the WWI connection between the Gurkhas (being part of the Indian Army at that time) and the New Forest, with special places where a ghat (funeral pyre) was built so they could be cremated according to their religion for those who sadly died. It is believed that one of these ghats was situated in Perry Wood.

After the talk the group spent time examining the museum’s exhibits before moving on to an excellent Nepalese curry lunch, produced by Mrs Bindhaya Gurung in the impressive McDonald Gallery [see photos] amongst the very impressive medal, badge and art collection, including some of the regimental silverware [see photos] specially put out for the group’s visit .

