

Prestigious agreement with China signed 'Guardians to the King' Terracotta Treasures from Ancient China Colchester Castle Museum

Colchester Castle Museum is celebrating the signing of a highly prestigious agreement with China, which will see terracotta figures exhibited in Essex for the very first time. This exhibition is going to be a significant story for the Eastern region and the most prestigious and rarest of exhibitions that Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service has staged at Colchester Castle.

Thanks to Essex County Council's unique, 20-year partnership with Jiangsu Province in China, Colchester Castle Museum will be hosting an exhibition of 43 miniature terracotta figures from Xuzhou Museum.

The exhibition will provide a genuine, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view these fascinating figures which have never been seen before anywhere in the UK.

This agreement has been in partnership with Essex County Council and is an integral part of the Chinese Jiangsu festival, taking place all over Essex.

Cllr Christopher Arnold, Portfolio Holder for Culture and the Environment, says:

"We are privileged that in the year that the world focuses on China, Colchester Castle Museum will be hosting a nationally significant exhibition of ancient Chinese terracotta figures. The parallels between the Chinese empire of the Han Dynasty and the Roman Empire are quite remarkable, making Britain's first Roman capital Colchester, the ideal venue for this cultural treat".

The exhibition (opening 19th July - 2nd Nov 2008) celebrates 20 years of friendship between Essex and Jiangsu. This exclusive international exhibition will offer visitors a rare and breathtaking experience to see objects and discover stories from the Chinese Han Dynasty.

County Councillor, Jeremy Lucas, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Heritage, Culture and the Arts, added: "This is a tremendous coup for Essex and for Colchester. An exhibition of this significance is a rarity in the county and I am delighted that our strong partnership with Jiangsu has led to a display of such magnitude. These ancient figures are truly fascinating and will provide a unique glimpse of history, right on our doorstep. An exhibition not to be missed."

The terracotta figures, all between 1ft and 2 ft tall, are over 2,000 years old and represent soldiers, officials, dancers, musicians and cavalry horses. They have been excavated in the last 25 years from a series of royal tombs discovered at Xuzhou, which belonged to the Kings of Chu. The kings were related to the Western Han emperors whose dynasty ruled China from 206 BCE to 24CE. The figures are from the same tradition as the slightly older terracotta warriors from Xian, which are currently on display at the British Museum in London.

This exhibition aims to further enhance and grow the established outreach and audience development work that has been ongoing over the past few years with the Chinese community in the region. There will be large programme of public and family events across Colchester and Ipswich, which will be carefully planned to coordinate and fit with the region's events.

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Colchester and Ipswich Museum service

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