Plucked from the Earth after 2,000 years: Archaeologists unveil 120 stunning new figures after third dig at terracotta warriors' site

- Latest discoveries in China include never-before-seen artefacts, including war drums and a painted shield
- More than 310 pieces newly excavated in total

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Excavations in China have unearthed a stunning new collection of 2,000-year-old terracotta warriors and hundreds of other artefacts. Archaeologists unveiled 120 new terracotta warriors yesterday at the Qin Shihuang Unesco World Heritage site in Shaanxi province. The current excavation, which started in 2009, is the third at the site following two previous digs which were carried out in 1974 and 1985.

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Painstaking: Archaeologists at work in the extended excavation of the Pit One of the Terracotta Warriors and Horses Museum in Xian, China where they are measuring and recording the dimensions of the latest terracotta warrior find
Detail: The terracotta warriors are being carefully uncovered using delicate equipment to help preserve the detailed work in their original production more than 2,000 years ago.
The artefacts in western China were buried with the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty in the 3rd century BC.

The latest discoveries include never-before-seen items, including war drums and a dramatic painted shield. In total, more than 310 small pieces have been newly excavated as well as 12 clay horses.

The third excavation covers about 200 square metres in pit number one - the largest and the most visited of the Terracotta Warriors And Horses Museum.

Some of the other unusual finds in the latest dig include a tool box for chariots, a crossbow, painted drum and items dyed a unique Chinese purple colouring.

The dig is expected to be finished within three years.

Once uncovered, the statues are taken to a dedicated museum to have their colours restored, before joining their fellows soldiers in the world famous exhibition.
Future: The dig at the pit is expected to carry on for another three years during which time the latest terracotta warriors will be painstakingly revealed and eventually put on public display.

Beautiful: Each of the amazing life-sized terracotta warriors uncovered in China has its own hairstyle and facial features and clothing.
More than 1,000 of the life-size statues, each with unique facial expressions and hair styles, have already been discovered at the site. They were originally put in place to guard the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China. The fierce figures are among the best-known images of China. Reproductions in sizes ranging from miniature to full size are sold in gift shops around the country and an exhibition of 20 figures and dozens of artefacts from the tomb broke ticket sale records when it travelled in 2008 to London, California, Houston and Washington.

Cao Wei, director of the mausoleum museum site, said preserving the figures would be far more challenging than the relatively simple task of excavating them.

One archaeologist said the museum has been co-operating with a cultural relic department at a university in Germany for years trying to find a satisfactory technology to preserve the colour of the terracotta, and has ‘made some headway’.

MOULD AND COAL DUST.. ENEMIES OF THE 6FT TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

In all, the tomb’s three pits are thought to hold 8,000 life-sized figures of archers, infantry soldiers, horse-drawn chariots, officers and acrobats, plus 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses. It is believed they were created to protect the emperor in the afterlife.

The statues stand between 6ft and 6ft 5in tall and weigh about 400lb. They are intricately detailed and no two figures are alike – craftsmen are believed to have modelled them after a real army.