

Bun Tower adds Hong Kong excitement to London tradition

Hong Kong unveiled a full-size replica of a Cheung Chau Bun Tower complete with bun-pickers and 5,600 buns as its entry in the City of London Lord Mayor's Show today (Saturday, November 11).

It was the second time the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has entered the 800-year-old event, which dates from King John's Charter to the City in 1215.

The Lord Mayor's Show attracts huge crowds on the city streets each year, while the BBC broadcasts it live to about two million people in Britain and globally.

The bun tower festival began as a ceremony to placate the spirits of people killed by plague on Cheung Chau Island in the late 19th century and the procession is carried out on the Buddha's birthday (a public holiday in Hong Kong and some other countries in the region) so that everybody can enjoy the festival.

The London Bun Tower was modelled closely on the Cheung Chau original and was a 52 feet high structure erected between the Bank of England and the Lord Mayor's official residence, Mansion House.

It was 11.5 feet wide at the base, weighed 3.5 tons with 3.5 tons of ballast inside, and was designed to withstand winds of 40 mph. The steel core was overlaid with bamboo poles and then wrapped in tissue paper, on which 5,600 replica buns have been glued.

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) London, devised and arranged the entry.

A team of ten acrobats and belayers trained for weeks to master the art of 'scrambling' up the towers while picking off buns and packing them into sacks slung over the shoulder. The acrobats dropped a banner to salute the new Lord Mayor of London, Alderman John Stuttard.

Miss Sarah Wu, Director-General of the HKETO, said: "This race to the top is emblematic of Hong Kong's constant striving to achieve excellence. We aim to provide Asia's best environment for success. We invite people from around the world to visit, work and live in Hong Kong and enjoy the exciting Hong Kong experience."

The HKETO represents the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the UK and nine other countries in Europe. The office was honoured to be invited back to the Lord Mayor's Show and, as a member of the London community, invited the East London youth group, the Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders, to share the red carpet 'stage area' in front of the Bun Tower.

Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders began in November 1996 as an outreach of Ascension Church Centre, in the London Borough of Newham. The group has developed into one of the UK's most successful youth programs, as well as Britain's best all-round cheerleader program. The Cheerleaders were part of the UK entry in the Chinese New Year Night Parade held in Hong Kong in 2004.

Caption:

Bun-pickers scramble to pick 5,600 buns off a replica Cheung Chau Bun Tower erected as Hong Kong's entry in the 2006 Lord Mayor's Show in the City of London today (November 11).