

Scots team use their Edinburgh experience in India



A team of experts from Scotland, who have already worked on sites in Edinburgh, is digitally recording the sculptures and terraces of an ancient Indian monument using laser technology in a pioneering partnership between the Scottish Government, through its heritage agency Historic Scotland, and the Glasgow School of Art's Digital Documentation Studio.

Rani Ki Vav Stepwell – one of northern India's most captivating and historic sites – is to be recreated in 3D digital form to help maintain it for future generations.

Together they have set themselves the goal of laser scanning all of Scotland's UNESCO recognised World Heritage Sites and five international cultural icons.

The team had hoped to carry out the work in March but the trip had to be postponed to allow them extra time to work out the logistics of capturing the different levels of the well and ensure all the necessary lasers were available.

Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said:- "The Scottish 10 is a wonderful project and we are very proud to be working with the Archaeological Survey of India to record such an incredible heritage site as the stepwell.

"Together we are sharing our expertise in digital recording, heritage conservation and cultural education which I believe will be invaluable to both India and Scotland.

“I am looking forward to being able to see for myself the magnificence of Rani Ki Vav via the digital model when the Scottish 10 team return and it will mean so many more people across the globe can appreciate the skill, ambition and significance that went into its creation, even if they are not fortunate enough to see the real stepwell in Gujarat.”

The Scottish Ten project has already scanned St Kilda, New Lanark, The Heart of Neolithic Orkney and part of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Sites in Scotland and Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. The other Scottish World Heritage Site to be scanned will be the Antonine Wall as part of the transnational Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS.

Doug Pritchard, of GSA Digital Design Studio, said “From Rushmore to St. Kilda, all of the Scottish Ten projects pose real technical and logistical challenges. In the case of the Rani Ki Vav Stepwell, the issue will be the precise documentation of the various sculptures adorning the walls of the well.

“Our team is looking forward to working with the Archaeological Survey of India. It will provide a great opportunity to share expertise and skills, to build stronger links between the two organisations.”

Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond announced that Rani Ki Vav would be part of the project during the handover of the Commonwealth Games from Delhi to Glasgow with Prime Minister Monmohan Singh in October last year.

Rani Ki Vav stepwell in Gujarat dates back to 1050. It is made up of stepped terraces descending into the ground and adorned with around 400 sculptures representing a range of Hindu themes.

As one of the most important step wells in India, Rani Ki Vav has only been fully excavated in the last 50 years and is currently on the UNESCO tentative list to be considered for

World Heritage Site status. The digital documentation will hopefully help to bring the site to a much wider national and international profile.

Three international sites in China, Japan and another country still to be decided are still to be announced as part of the Scottish Ten.

All of the images created will be shared with the American not-for-profit organisation CyArk, founded by Ben Kacyra, inventor of the laser scanner. It is collecting the data from 500 world heritage landmarks to hold in a freely accessible global archive.

[CyArk](#) Founder, Ben Kacyra, is excited to see the documentation of Rani ki Vav take place.

He said:- “It is my passion to digitally preserve these unique and inspiring icons of human history so that future generations may marvel at their wonder the way we do today.

“We are proud partners in the Scottish 10, which allows the story of our cultural pasts to be shared with all people and preserve the collective memory of humankind.”