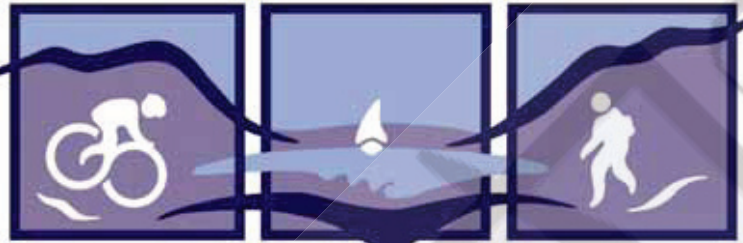


## GREAT GLEN WAYS



SLIGHEAN A' GHLINN MHÓIR

It took 21 years to construct the Caledonian Canal **Canàl Cailleannach** - from the first survey to the official opening. Twenty-two miles of artificial cuttings connected lochs along the Great Glen to make an inland shipping route between the west and east coasts of Scotland.

The aim was to help ships cut their journey times; avoid the stormy waters of the Pentland Firth **An Caol Arcach**; and keep out of range of enemy attack at sea. The canal was also meant to provide employment and help reverse the tide of emigration **eilthreachd** from the Highlands, which had begun in the late 1700s.

Thomas Telford was the mastermind behind the canal. Commissioned by the government, he oversaw the building of the biggest British waterway of its time.

Today the canal still provides a safe route for working boats (including tugs, lifeboats, Navy training vessels and fishing boats) and leisure craft (especially yachts and motor cruisers). It has also become increasingly popular with visitors enjoying the spectacular scenery of the Great Glen.

### Did you know...?

The canal never fulfilled its true potential. The size of many merchant and navy boats increased beyond all expectations during the 19th Century, making them too large to use it. Many fishing vessels still chose the speedier yet more dangerous route north.

# The greatest canal of its day *An canàl bu mhotha na latha*

*Pronounced: an canal bu mo-tha na la-a*



Castletown boats at Banavie, 1900.

### A great achievement Fìor choileanadh

"The last portion of the canal was now entered. It is eight miles in length and contains twelve locks... It was half past five when the vessel at last dipped her keel into the waters of the Western Ocean, amidst the loud acclamations of her passengers and a great concourse of spectators. The termination of the voyage was marked by a grand salute from the Fort, whilst the inhabitants of Fort William demonstrated their joy by kindling a large bonfire. A plentiful supply of whisky **uisge-beatha** (water of life), given by the gentlemen of Fort William, did not in the least dampen the ardour of the populace."

*Extract of report from the Inverness Courier on the official opening of the Caledonian Canal in October 1822, when the first ship sailed the length of the canal from east to west.*

Plan of the Caledonian Canal, 1821.

