



The canal which climbed and climbed

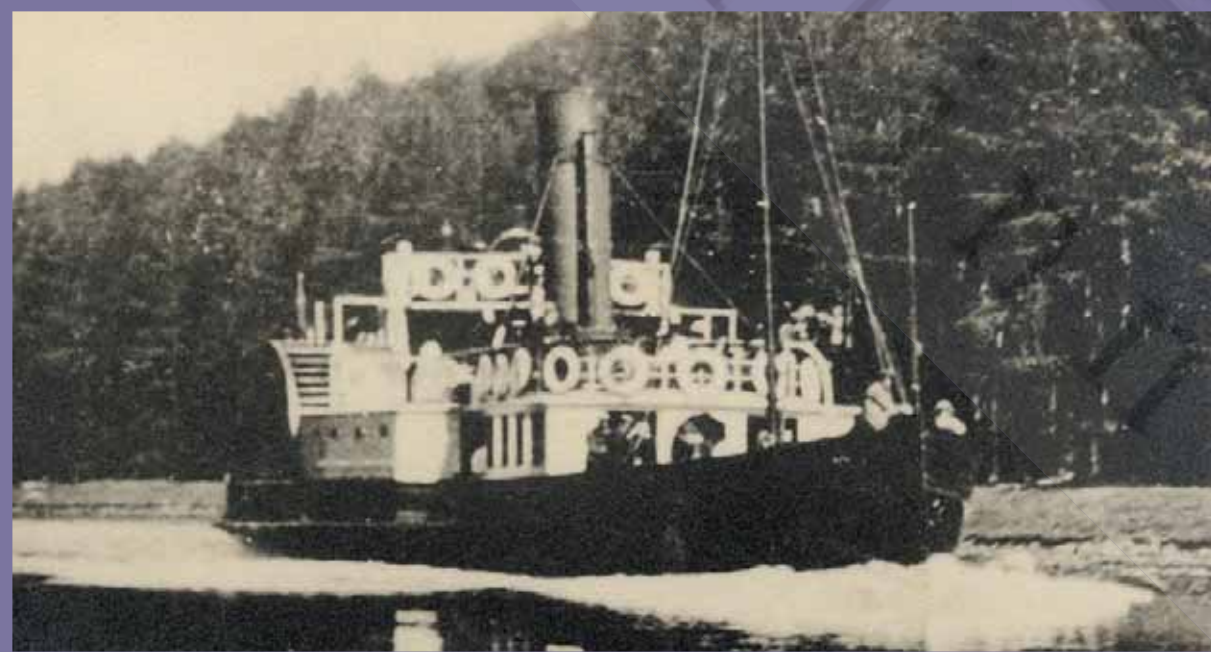
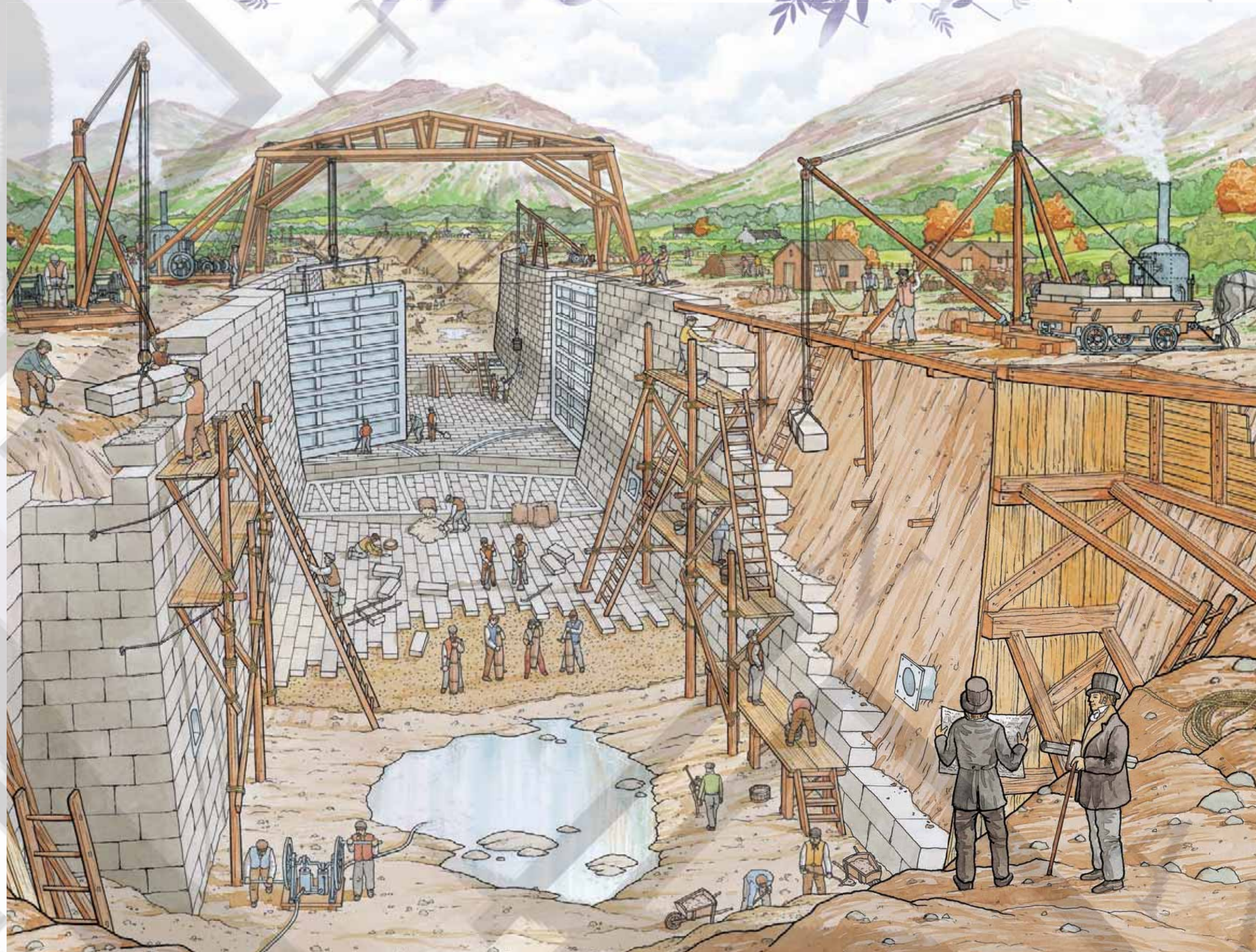
An canàl a bha a' sìor dhìreadh

Pronounced: An canal a va sheer yeera

Constructing this, the highest stretch of the canal *canàl*, at 32 metres (106 feet) above sea level, was a major challenge. There were massive amounts of earth to be dug out. Up to 250 men worked here, using horse-drawn wagons on railways to take the earth away.

Robert Southey, the poet, visited Laggan while work was underway in 1819. From a huge mound of earth, looking down at the workmen, he said that they were "*in the proportion of emmets (ants) to an ant hill*". The canal was officially opened in 1822.

In 1876 disaster struck at Laggan when the steamer *Staffa* crashed through the top lock gates. The story goes that an inexperienced young sailor, in charge while the Captain had his dinner, misheard "full speed back" "*air ais aig astar*" and went "full speed ahead" "*air adhart aig astar*" instead. Despite extensive damage, the locks were open again in only five weeks.



Did you know...?

By the 1870s, steamer trips along the canal were very popular - good news for local hotels and shops but less good for the lock-keepers' wives who weren't allowed to hang washing out when steamers were passing!

Paddle steamer, Laggan Avenue.



Aerial view of Laggan Locks.