

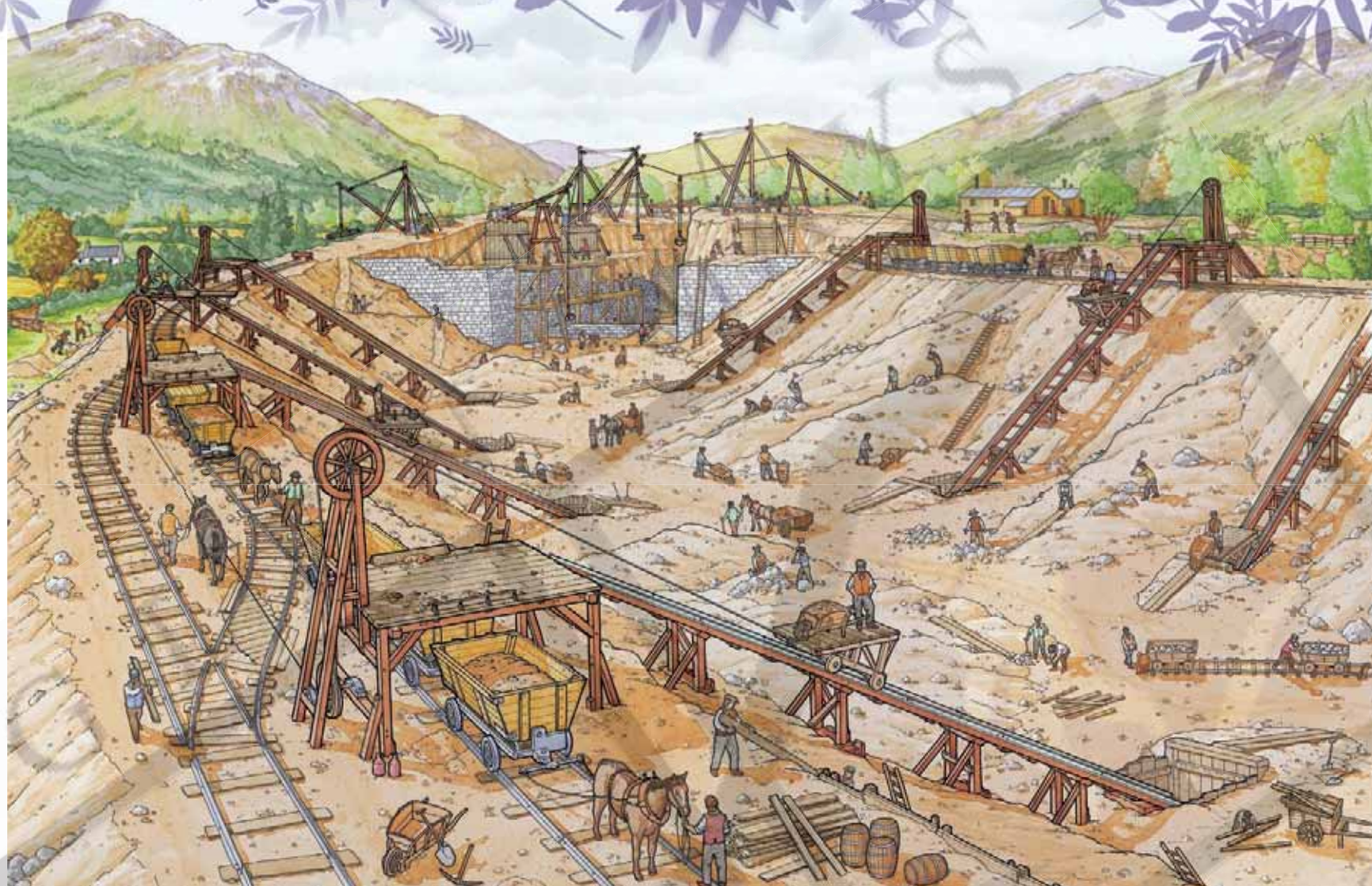
Digging the canal

A' cladhach a' canal

Pronounced: A cla-ach a chanal

In 1805 this was a scene of great activity. Work had started on excavating the canal, with 130 men digging out barrowloads of soil which were then wheeled up planks to the top. As the cutting became deeper, horses were brought in to pull the barrows up.

At the top the men heaped up the soil to form the upper banks of the canal. They used horse-drawn wagons *cairtean is eich*, which ran along a railway, to take surplus soil to stretches where the banks needed to be built higher. At Dalneigh (to the east) and the Bught (to the west) you can see stretches of low-lying land, where high banks were built to keep the canal at the level required.



Did you know ...?

Tomnahurich and the Caledonian Canal were the subject of a prophecy said to have been made by the mysterious Brahan Seer - Kenneth MacKenzie or Dun-coloured Kenneth Coinneach Odhar - more than a hundred years before the canal was built.

"Strange as it may seem to you this day, the time will come, and it is not far off, when full-rigged ships will be seen sailing eastward and westward by the back of Tomnahurich."



The hill of the fairies? Cnoc nan sìthichean?

The hill across from here is "Tomnahurich", which some people think means the "hill of the fairies". The story goes that, long ago, two fiddlers *fidhlearn* were invited by an old man to play music for his family. They followed him to Tomnahurich where he showed them into a huge hall inside the hill filled with small, beautiful people. In the morning, after a night of music and feasting, the fiddlers left for home - only to discover that one hundred years had passed and the doorway to the hillside had vanished for ever.

A less colourful explanation is that "Tomnahurich" comes from the Gaelic "hill of the yew trees" - *tom na h-iùbhraich*.

