



A staircase for boats

Staidhre do bhàtaichean

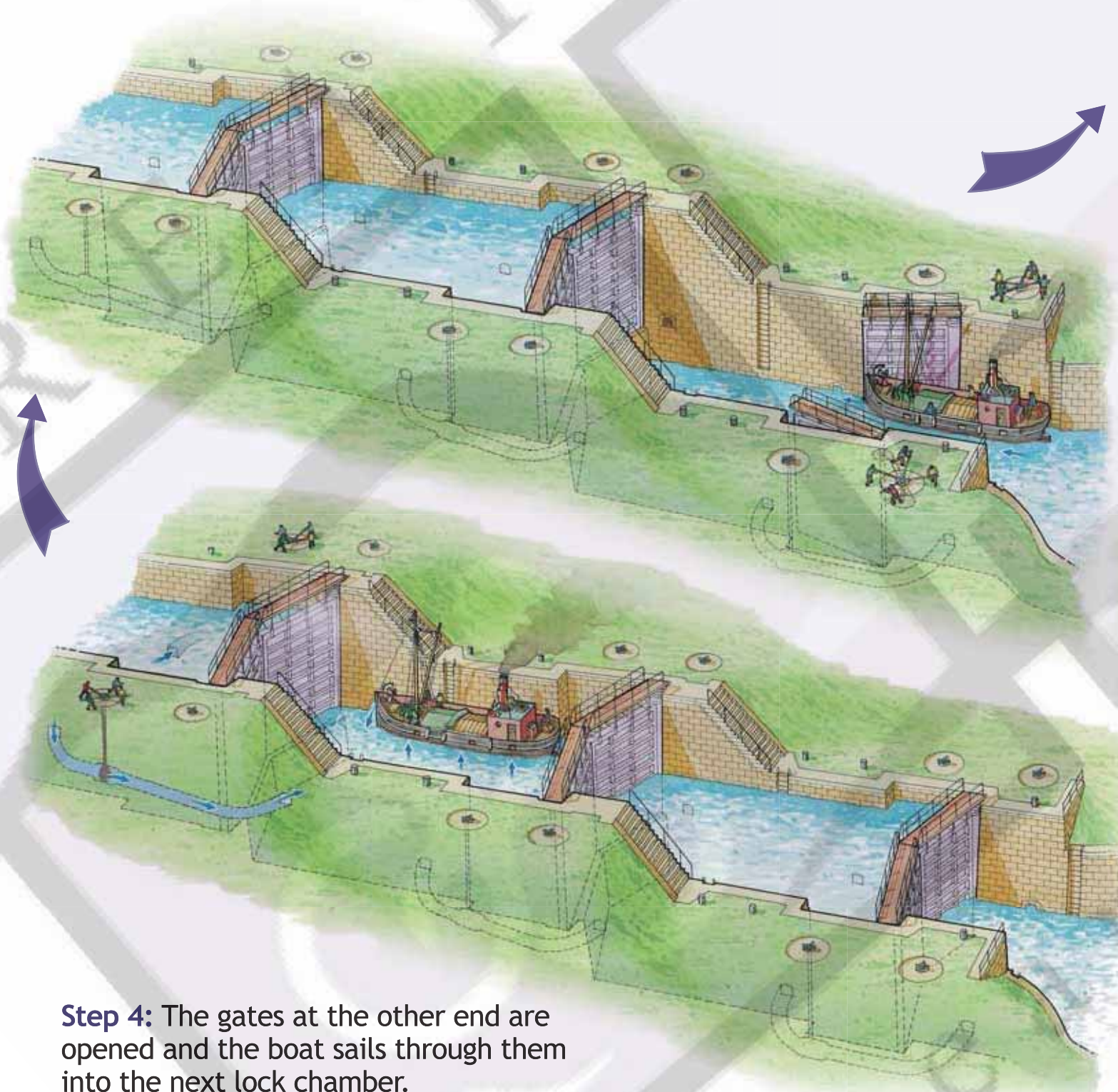
Pronounced: *Styra do vateechen*

The locks you see here at Muirtown Baile an Fhraoich (town of the heather) allow boats to be raised or lowered between different levels of the Caledonian Canal. There are a total of four locks which form a "staircase".

Clachnaharry Clachan an h-Aire (lookout village), about a mile west of here, was the headquarters for the building of this stretch of the canal. By 1806 there were 600 masons, carpenters *saor* and blacksmiths *gobha* based there. Workshops and stores had been built; there was a pier for unloading the cargoes of tools, timber, iron and stone, which came in by sea; and tramways *slighe-tram* with horse-drawn wagons had been installed to transport supplies to wherever they were needed along the canal's route.

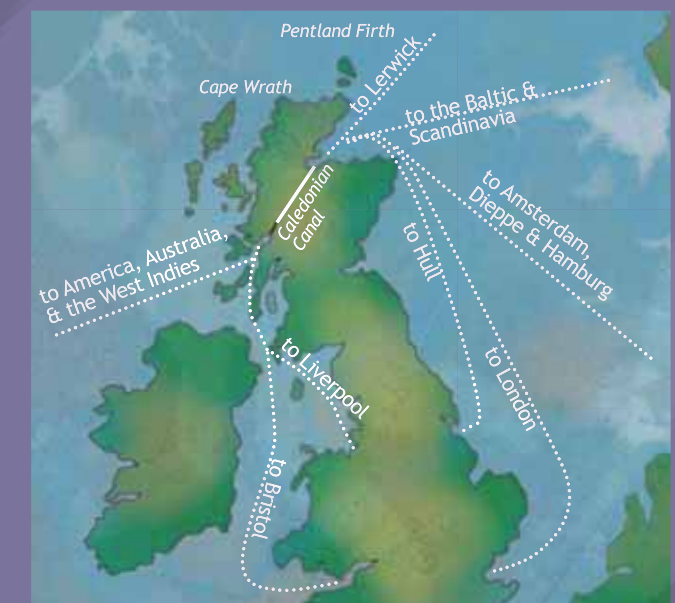
How does the staircase work?
Ciamar a tha an Staidhre ag obrachadh?

Step 1: The gates at one end are opened and the boat sails in.

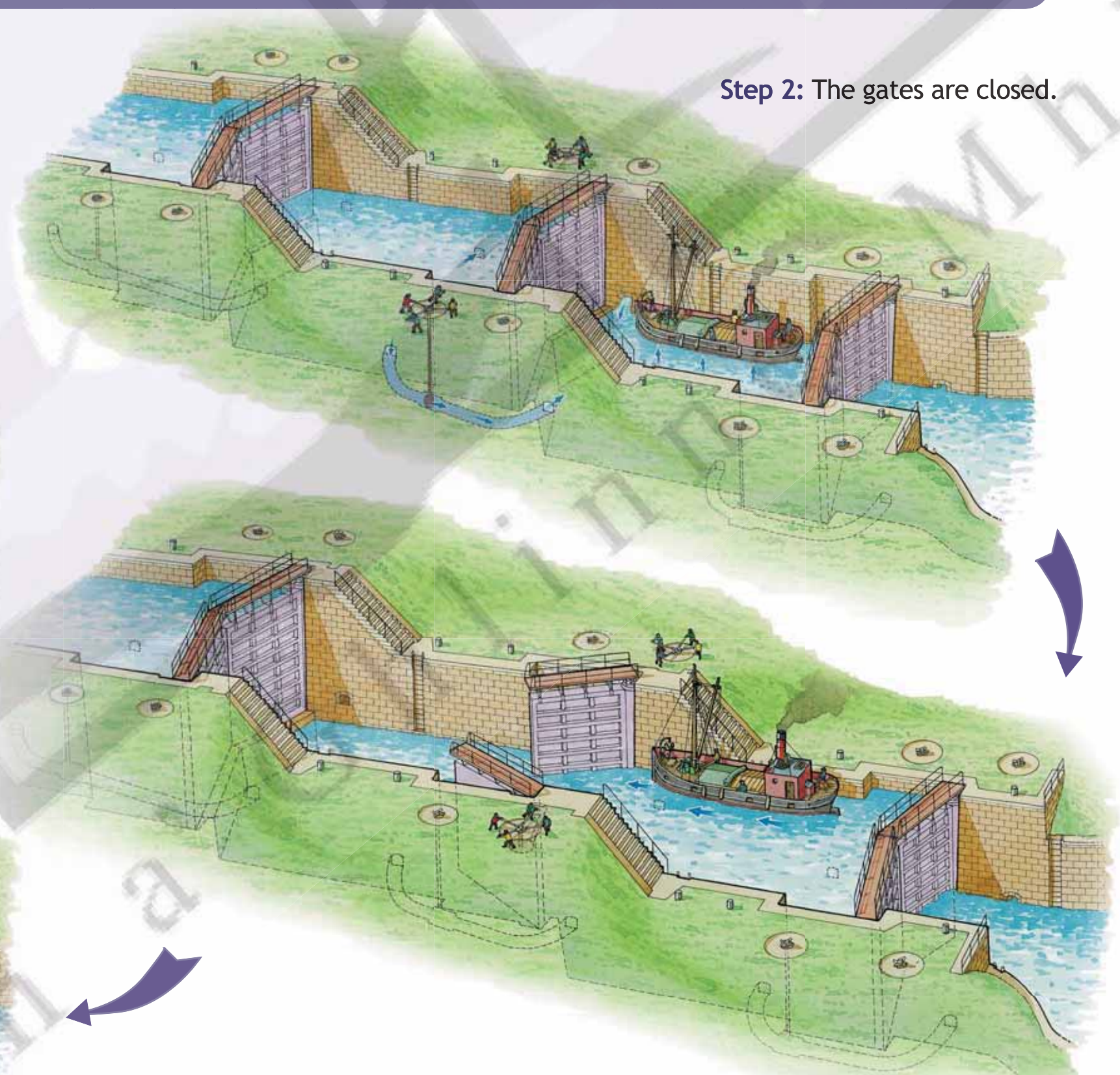


Did you know ...?

The Caledonian Canal was built in the early 1800s as an inland link between the east and west coasts of Scotland. The aim was to help ships cut their journey times, avoid the stormy waters of the Pentland Firth, and keep out of range of enemy attack at sea. (The Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France were at their peak during this time). Work began in 1803 and the canal opened in 1822.



Step 2: The gates are closed.



Step 4: The gates at the other end are opened and the boat sails through them into the next lock chamber.

Step 3: The amount of the water in the lock is either increased (if the boat is being raised) or reduced (if the boat is being lowered). This continues until the water reaches the same level as the water in the lock where the boat is going next.