

## CSCE Delegation attend Telford 250 Symposium and Tour

In July of 2007, a delegation of members of the CSCE National History Committee composed of Committee Chair Reg Wallace, CSCE Past President Alistair MacKenzie, Dr. Roger Dorton and Dr. Doug Wright, joined members of the ICE and ASCE in a Symposium and Tour celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Telford, the famed Victorian Civil Engineer.

The Symposium, held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh, covered many aspects of Telford's life and works, principally in the UK, but there were three "International" presentations one of which was on "Telford's Canadian Works". The papers may be viewed in the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Web site: <http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/events/reports/2006-2007/telford.pdf>

Next day the tour group of around 80 engineers, spouses and friends left from Heriot Watt University for a tour of Telford's works in the Scottish Highlands. Crossing the Firth of Forth on the way north the party enjoyed a splendid view of that icon of Civil Engineering history, the famous Forth Rail Bridge. A stop in Dundee afforded the opportunity to view the polar exploration ship "Discovery" of "Scott of the Antarctic" fame, which is preserved in a Telford designed dry dock. The next stop was at Aberdeen where the Telford designed harbour is now very busy with North Sea oil support vessels. Following an excellent buffet lunch in Aberdeen's splendid Maritime Museum, the delegation traveled to Elgin where the first day's events were concluded with a reception hosted by Moray Council.

Next morning, the delegation deviated from viewing Telford sites by studying the complex process of manufacturing Scotland's most famous export at the Macallan Distillery. The opportunity to do a quality check on the product was eagerly accepted!

Following a civic lunch hosted by Moray Council, adjacent to Telford's Craiggellachie Bridge, the group attended the unveiling of a plaque by the ASCE President's representative Allen Beene designating the Bridge as an International Civil Engineering Landmark. This bridge, the oldest surviving example of Telford's cast iron bridges represented a significant advancement in bridge design at the time of construction in 1814. The event attracted over 200 onlookers and was well covered by the Scottish media.

The party then traveled via Telford's harbour at Burghead, to Inverness to board the *Jacobite Queen* for an evening dinner cruise, on Telford's Caledonian Canal and on Loch Ness. During the cruise, a plaque designating the Caledonian Canal as an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark was presented to the Chairman of British Waterways by the ASCE's Allen Beene. No sightings of the infamous Loch Ness "monster" were reported despite the consumption on board of significant quantities of Scotland's national product.

Next day, the group traveled further north to Telford's harbour at Fortrose and the Mound, a causeway crossing Loch Fleet, which incorporates a system of "one way" sluices designed to assist in land reclamation.



**ABOVE** Craigellache Bridge elevation

**RIGHT** Plaque at the Caledonian Canal at Fort Augustus flight locks:  
Left to right: Allan Beene, Dr. Henry Petroski, Alistair MacKenzie, David Gilbert, Reg Wallace, Professor Roland Paxton (ICE Panel for Historical Works and organizer of the Telford Tour), Dr. Empry Kemp, Dr. Jerry Rogers, Dr. Roger Dorton, Professor Quentin Leiper (ICE President)

The final day of the tour followed the line of the Caledonian Canal southward to view the outstanding Civil Engineering achievement of the canal, the flight of eight locks known as "Neptune's Stairway". On the way, a stop was made to view one of the few remaining examples of James Dredge's "taper principle" suspension bridges at Oich.

The tour was a great success and provided a showcase for the rich heritage of Telford's civil engineering works. Although he never visited Canada, Telford's influence on Canadian Civil Engineering was significant. He participated as a consultant in several major Canadian Civil Engineering projects, the Shubenacadie Canal in Nova Scotia, the Welland Canal in Ontario, the proposed Baie Verte Canal in New Brunswick and harbour works in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Several of the most successful early Canadian Civil Engineers owed their success to having been trained by, or having worked with Telford before they came to Canada. It could also be argued that he had an influence on our own Society, as it was Telford's acceptance of the role as first President of the Institution of Civil Engineers that ensured the success of that organization and it was on the ICE that the original Canadian Society of Civil Engineers was modeled. ■