

Panel for Historical Engineering Works Newsletter

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Panel Meeting, Newcastle 2009 and Denis Smith's Retirement by The Editor

The Panel's autumn meeting was held at Newcastle University's Castle Leaze site on 9 and 10 September 2009. Aply organised by PHEW's North East representative Professor Iain Moffat, the meeting was arranged to coincide with part of the ICE North East's commemorations of the death of Robert Stephenson (see also subsequent article).

The Panel's business meeting was an opportunity for Panel members to renew acquaintance with Bob Rennison, longstanding NE PHEW representative before his relatively recent retirement and for the Chairman, Brian Crossley to present Denis Smith with an historic print to mark his retirement as London representative from the Panel. Denis has been greatly involved in Panel activities since joining in April 1988. He edited the London and Thames Valley edition of the *Civil Engineering Heritage* series, organised a very successful Panel meeting and has over the years both in publications and lecturing made a substantial contribution to the understanding of engineering history and heritage. He remains involved as author of the next regional volume for London.



PHEW Newcastle, September 2009



Denis Smith's Retirement Presentation

Following the meeting, Panel members joined other guests at a Civic reception, before attending a very well received lecture delivered by Michael Bailey on 'Robert Stephenson – The Eminent Engineer'. An enjoyable supper was held at the Northumbrian University's Officer Training Corps Mess. The following day the Panel boarded the river boat *MV Coventina* for a trip on the Tyne to view river side sites of interest and the multiplicity of river crossings, including Stephenson's iconic High Level Bridge.

Robert Stephenson Commemorations from ICE Press Release

On 12 October 2009, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) North East marked the 150th anniversary of the death of industry pioneer Robert Stephenson at two wreath laying ceremonies – more than 280 miles apart.

After laying the first wreath at Newcastle's Stephenson Monument with the Sheriff of the City of Newcastle upon Tyne, Councillor Brenda Hindmarsh, and ICE North East chairman Greg Lutton, regional director Stephen Larkin took a second wreath on the train to London for a ceremony in the capital.

In addition to the Sheriff of the City of Newcastle upon Tyne the wreath laying ceremony in Newcastle was attended by the Sheriff's Lady Mrs Gitta Faulkner, representatives of ICE North East and the Engineering Institutions, along with other invited guests.

Following the 0955 wreath laying at the Stephenson Monument, there was a prayer and blessing by Very Revd Christopher Dalliston, the Dean, St Nicholas Cathedral.

Stephen Larkin travelled to Westminster Abbey, burial place of Robert Stephenson, where he was joined by ICE President Jean Venables and some of the Institution's directors for the second wreath laying.

Bicentenary Telford Bridge, Dunkeld

by Christopher R Ford

ICE Scotland, in conjunction with the Panel for Historical Engineering Works, has installed a plaque on Telford's bridge over the river Tay at Dunkeld to mark the bicentenary of its opening in 1809.

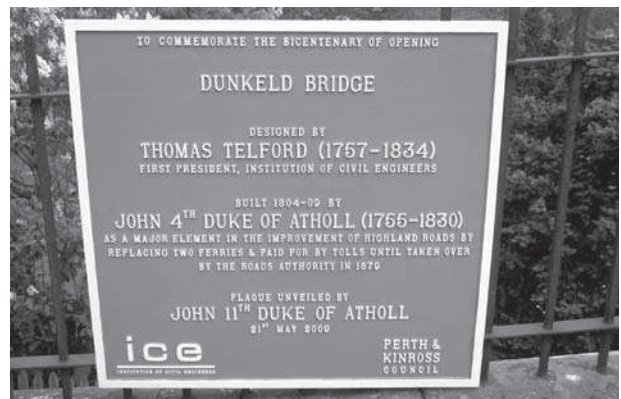


Unveiling the Dunkeld Bridge Plaque © C R Ford

The bridge was built by John 4th Duke of Atholl between 1804-1809 to replace two ferries as part of the scheme by the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges to

improve the Roads and Access in the Highlands, the Duke to recover his share of the costs by toll charges. Designed by Thomas Telford, it is 166m (546ft) long with seven arches and is considered to be his finest Highland Bridge.

The plaque was unveiled on 21 May 2009 by John 11th Duke of Atholl as an acknowledgement of the part played by his ancestor. He was welcomed by a piper from his unique private army, the Atholl Highlanders, introduced by Jamie Christie chairman East of Scotland branch of ICE and thanked by Councillor Ann Gaunt Vice- Convenor of the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee of Perth and Kinross Council. The party then adjourned for afternoon tea to the Atholl Arms a hostelry as old as the bridge itself.



Dunkeld Bridge Plaque Text © C R Ford

Kyle Rhea Ferry – Glenelg to Skye – Telford, 1818

by Roland Paxton

Readers of Dr Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* may recall his having in 1773 to sleep on hay in his riding coat in the inn at Glenelg ... 'Mr Boswell being more delicate laid himself sheets with hay over and under him and lay in linen like a gentleman!' The next day they were ferried to Armidale, and comfort.



Glenelg Road over Mam Ratanagan to Kyle Rhea and Skye (Telford 1810) © R Paxton

Last year my attention was drawn to the unlisted historic Kyle Rhea ferry by the owner of its Glenelg slip James Watt (I'm not kidding!) and his partner Melanie Baines who wish to preserve it in use, an aim worthy of Panel support. Following an approach to Historic Scotland supported by PHEW Scotland, the Glenelg slips were listed category C(S) – a limited success! Following further research in Edinburgh, and on site, a fuller case has been put recently to Historic Scotland by myself, with Panel Member Sandra Purves's support, with a view to seeking an 'A' listing for the complete ferry and so facilitating the authentic repair of this 191-year-old outstanding transport facility which is mostly in excellent original state.



Kyle Rhea Ferry Glenelg 1818 – pier, cattle slip and former Ferry Inn © R Paxton

There has been a ferry at this site, the narrowest crossing to Skye, from the earliest times. The ferry also had a robust national military connection with nearby Bernera Barracks for several decades from c.1750. However, the case for an 'A' listing of its present structures is primarily based on the ferry being an integral part of a national route from Edinburgh to and across Skye for many years after its completion by the Highland Road Commission in 1818 (its red line appears continuous over the Kyle on the Commission's final 9th Report map of 1821) and before. Also, for its first class design and build documentation and provenance (Telford / Mitchell / Davidson) and, not least, the extraordinary context of its unique separate slip which accommodated up to 8,000 swimming black cattle annually for nearly a century – a trade dubbed by the late Professor A R B Haldane 'once a vivid and vital part of the life of Scotland'.



Kyle Rhea Ferry Glenelg – cattle slip, pier and re-sited Sandaig Lighthouse © R Paxton

The ferry slips were finely executed in 1818 for £1,146 by one of Telford's most competent and dedicated Highland Roads contractors, John Davidson, whose skill and integrity were praised by the poet Southey after an inspection of his work with Telford in 1819 (*Journal*. John Murray, 1929). The adjoining Glenelg Road [built from 1814-1819 over Mam Ratagan pass by John Read for £8,806] has a remarkable 90m long and at least 5.5m high in places retaining wall at the Glenelg slip approach which is deserving of inclusion in Historic Scotland's group listing.

The present ferry boat with its swivel deck is now rare and also of considerable interest. During my inspection in July (in fine weather!) its operation at the slip, overlooked by the relocated Old Sandaig Lighthouse (D A Stevenson 1909) and cattle slip with the former Ferry Inn in the background, provided an historic transport experience of great quality and charm.



Glenelg Road ferry approach – tall retaining wall partly collapsed (1818) © R Paxton

Hamilton Graving Dock, Belfast by Philip Donald

Belfast had a long history of ship-building from the eighteenth century until the late twentieth. Initially two small dry docks were built on the County Antrim side of the river Lagan. As ships became bigger five further dry docks were built, all on the County Down side, culminating in the huge Building Dock, designed to accommodate super tankers. All seven docks are HEWs.

In the news in August 2009 was the first of the dry docks to be built on the County Down side. It is the Hamilton Dock which became operative in 1867. It is 470ft long with an entrance width of 60ft. It had a caisson type gate which could be floated into position and then ballasted to settle at the entrance to the dock. In 1911 the 'Titanic' was ready for launching. Its proposed transatlantic route was to be Southampton to Cherbourg to Cobh to New York. Because the harbours at Cherbourg and Cobh were not deep enough to accommodate the 'Titanic' and her sister ships, they would moor offshore and be serviced by tenders which would bring out passengers and their luggage.