Thomas Telford Encyclopedia Article

Thomas Telford

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Thomas Telford

1757-1834

Scottish civil engineer who has been described as the father of structural engineering. Telford began his career as a journeyman stonemason in England, and in 1793 was assigned to build the Ellesmere Canal in Wales. Between 1802 and 1812 he constructed more than 1000 miles of roads and 1200 bridges in Scotland, before returning to England to build roads. By 1814 Telford had become the most distinguished civil engineer in Britain. Telford's notable works include the Caledonian Canal (1803-23), the London to Holyhead road, his Waterloo Bridge at Betws-y-Coed (1818), his chain-link suspension bridge over the Menai Straits (1819-26), and the St. Katherine's Docks in London (1824-28).