

# Telford

## New Town



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# Telford

At its highest point, 750-ft. above sea level, Telford has wonderful panoramic views of delightful Shropshire countryside. Telford also has many natural features, with lakes and woodlands, and with a unique historical background, offers tremendous possibilities for building an exciting new town. Sutton Hill, the site of the first housing development, overlooks the impressive Severn Gorge with views towards the Wrekin, the south and east that are virtually unrestricted.

Shropshire is one of England's most lovely counties and, situated on the borders of Wales, it is within easy reach of the magnificent countryside of the border counties and the holiday resorts of the Welsh coast. One of the most famous landmarks and beauty spots of the county is the Wrekin, on Telford's western boundary. It stands 1,335-ft. above sea level and most of Shropshire can be seen from its summit. Other well known view points in the county include the Clee Hills and Wenlock Edge in the south-west, the Long Mynd near Church Stretton, the Stiperstones, Caer Caradoc, Selattyn Hill, Hawkstone Park and Nesscliffe Hill.

There are many attractive old world towns and villages with historic backgrounds in Shropshire. To mention but a few - there is Shrewsbury itself, the county town, a fascinating mixture of medieval and modern; Bridgnorth, further down the river and scene of many battles over the years; and Church Stretton, unspoiled, lying in delightful country beneath the Long Mynd. Stokesay has an old fortified manor house which is said to be one of the finest examples of its kind in the country. There is Ludlow - a borough since the 13th Century - dominated by its castle and very popular with tourists; Market Drayton dates back to the Ancient Britons and is famous for its market which was granted a Royal Charter in the 13th Century. Much Wenlock is another medieval town, colourful, with half timbered buildings and the remains of a priory. Oswestry near the Welsh border and the foothills of the Welsh mountains boasts four markets, and derives its name from Oswald a King of Northumbria who died in a battle near Oswestry in 642. These are some of the many other places of interest in the county; Acton Burnell Castle; Attingham Hall; Benthall Hall; Bishop's Castle; Buildwas Abbey; Clun Castle; Coalbrookdale Industrial Museum; Conover Hall; Haughmond Abbey; Hodnet Hall Gardens; Hopton Castle; Langley Chapel; Acton Burnell; Lilleshall Abbey; Ludlow Castle; Ludlow Museum; Moreton Corbett Hall; Shrewsbury Castle; Stokesay Castle; Viroconium; Walcot Hall; Wenlock Abbey; Wenlock Guildhall; White Ladies (St. Leonard's Priory, Boscobel); Wilderhope (Youth Hostel).

## Designation

The New Town was first designated as Dawley in 1963. It was intended that the town would be planned and built to take 55,000 people from Birmingham and the Black Country, and create, in fifteen to twenty years, a town with a population of around 90,000.

Soon after the Draft Master Plan for Dawley New Town was published in January 1965, the West Midlands Study Group made a report to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government suggesting that an area to the north of Dawley, including Wellington and Oakengates, could take a further 50,000 people from Birmingham and the Black Country. The Minister agreed that this might be possible and the consultant planners were asked to examine the possibilities and make definite proposals for the area. The consultants made their report, the proposals were accepted in principle, and the Minister published a Draft Designation Amendment Order in December 1967, and in April/May, 1968, a Public Enquiry was held.

In October 1968, the Minister announced his decision to go ahead with the proposals and build a town for a population of about 220,000, and re-name the New Town Telford, after the famous engineer. On 13th December, 1968, an Order was made designating a further 10,143 acres of land around Wellington and Oakengates to be planned and developed with the 9,100 acres of Dawley New Town as a single enterprise under the existing Development Corporation - re-named Telford Development Corporation - working closely with local authorities and private enterprise.

The enlarged new city will take around 100,000 people from the overcrowded West Midlands conurbation by the mid or late 1980's. With the existing population of about 70,000, and growth by natural increase, the population will rise to about 220,000.

## **THE PLAN**

Telford, covering an area of 19,243 acres, includes the existing town and villages of Wellington, Admaston, Hadley, Trench, Donnington, Oakengates, Priorslee, to the north of the A5 and Dawley, Madeley, Stirchley, Horsehay, Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale to the south.

Telford is already the largest urban area in Shropshire. The New Town is made up of a number of separate communities, separately administered, and the plan - recognising the great value of the local loyalties - in addition to bringing in over 100,000 people from Birmingham and the Black Country, aims to weld them together in the New Town of Telford.

## **TRAFFIC-FREE AREAS**

To accommodate eventually the 220,000, a further 49,000 houses will have to be built, bringing the total to some 66,700 dwellings. It is the object of the plan that families will live in small groups of dwellings each group sharing a safe traffic-free area where children can play and pedestrians can walk in safety. In the new areas the groups will form larger clusters served by access roads and to some extent, visually separated from other clusters by landscaped open spaces.

Each cluster of houses will have a community of about 8,000 people and each three of these communities will form a district with its own shops, schools and other facilities to meet the needs of 24,000 people. Existing areas will follow this pattern as far as alterations will reasonably allow.

## **INDUSTRY**

People need jobs, and to make the town a success, an adequate amount of industry will need to be attracted to Telford. There are about 33,000 people at present working in the area and 99,000 jobs are being budgeted for twenty years time. The existing manufacturing industry is expected to provide 28,000, the rest being taken up by 42,000 in service industry, 23,000 in the new manufacturing industries, and 6,000 in defence, mining and agriculture.

Manufacturing industry has to provide the bulk of the increase in jobs and great care has been taken in the plan to selection of factory sites. This bears in mind the need to locate the industry with easy access to main roads and railways with room to expand when the occasion demands. Employees must be able to park their cars, and those without, be able to get to and from work easily by public transport.

The new industries in Telford will be accommodated on four major sites - Halesfield, Stafford Park, Leegomery and Lightmoor - each with

advantages for particular types of industry. Smaller areas at Tweedale, Ketley, Dawley, Madeley, Trench, and later Admaston, will accommodate small factories and service depots.

The Corporation is engaged on an ambitious programme for industrial development in conjunction with new housing and the supporting commercial and community facilities. With the house construction now in hand for 1,000 units per year, and even more from 1971, there is the need for an influx of new industry at the rate of at least half a million square feet of production space each year so that all houses can be filled.

There are 21 new factories at Tweedale providing 185,430 sq. ft. of floor space. Simultaneously, development of the much larger Halesfield industrial area (500 acres) is in progress. This will offer employment to at least 10,000 when fully developed, but as all firms are offered adequate land for future expansion, this target figure will be some years off. However, by 1972 all sites in Halesfield are likely to have been taken up and then industry will be moving into the Stafford Park area adjacent to the A464 Wolverhampton-Wellington road.

Both the industrial areas of Tweedale and Halesfield will be linked to a new dual carriageway road from the southern part of the New Town to the A464 at Priorslee for easy communication with the Black Country and the motorway network.

### **Halesfield**

This industrial area is situated astride the A4169 half a mile east of Madeley and contains some 400 acres. The first factories are in operation and development is taking place on a number of sites.

Halesfield is being planned to a very high standard with adequate roads and particularly good connections with the first residential areas of Sutton Hill and Woodside, segregation of pedestrians and cyclists on journeys to and from work, ample car parking, landscaped areas and small communal centres to meet urgent shopping needs.

Also a large petrol filling station, garage and showroom is proposed.

Three alternatives are open to the industrialist in Halesfield - standard factories up to 33,250 sq. ft. - factories designed to meet specific requirements - and sites on which he can build his own factory premises.

### **Tweedale**

Here are a range of standard factories from 1,000 to 20,000 sq. ft.

All factories have, in addition to the production area, good office and toilet accommodation, car parking and landscaped sites with room for future expansion in most cases.

### **Stafford Park**

Construction of factories will start in 1972 at Stafford Park the third new industrial area. Stafford Park covering an area of 500 acres is close to the Corporation's offices at Priorslee Hall and next to the A464 and the A5. It will be linked to the Stirchley and Madeley districts of Telford and by the first two mile section of the New Town's urban motorway opened in Autumn 1971.

## **SHOPPING AND SOCIAL CENTRES**

The shopping and social centres are to be organised on a three-tier system, the main town centre containing the larger shops and principal social facilities. Then there are the district centres, like Madeley, serving a population of about 24,000 for the weekly shopping trip, and the local centres will have shops within easy walking distance from the home catering for daily needs. Social life will revolve round these centres on a similar basis with schools being used, out of school hours, for leisure activities for all ages.

## **THE TOWN AND DISTRICT CENTRES**

The Town Centre is being constructed near to the realigned A5 in the Malinslee area, the first stage opening in 1973, with district centres at Madeley, Dawley, Stirchley, in the south; Wellington, Oakengates, Trench and Admaston in the north. At later stages there will be district centres at Donnington and St. Georges.

## **TRANSPORT**

Transport is essential to the life of any modern community, but planning needs to be flexible to allow for technological change. During the past eighty years, tremendous changes in transport from the horse-drawn vehicles to hovercraft have taken place, and who can foresee how our grandchildren will travel. The Telford Plan takes this uncertainty into account together with a determination to give people freedom of choice in the type of transport they use. It is recognised that most people want to own a car and be able to use it for work and leisure without undue restriction, but, at the same time, public transport must be readily available for all those who need it.

A system of roads has been planned, with all principal areas of population and industry linked by bus routes so that most people will live and work within a ¼ mile of the nearest bus stop. For the convenience of commuters and travellers generally, bus routes will pass close to the railway station. An urban rail system, serving larger distances within the city is possible as future growth demands.

The proposals allow for the separation of traffic by speed and type and include several innovations for the regulation of traffic flow according to the varying conditions. Heavy traffic will be kept away from the key shopping centres, and boundaries of parks and open space, keeping these areas safe for pedestrians and free from traffic exhaust fumes.

The A5 by-pass of course, will run through the centre of Telford connecting the town to the motorway system, the Black Country and Birmingham conurbation.

## **OPEN SPACES**

Twelve acres per 1,000 population in Telford will be allocated as open space, including parks, playing fields, greens and children's play areas in residential areas, golf courses and adventure playgrounds.

## **EDUCATION**

At present, the education system in the area consists of primary and secondary schools, but in the Stirchley district, a system of lower, middle and senior schools is to be introduced. A large number of new schools - and also facilities for further education, will be needed at all levels.

The schools will be built with regard to walking distances from home to school, safety of journey in regard to road crossing, motorised traffic and, in the case of secondary schools, convenience of bus services and cycle routes.

It is anticipated that land allocated for educational purposes will almost treble within 20 years from 440 to 1,130 acres.

## **LONG TERM PROJECT**

Constructing a new town to the size of Telford is a long-term project and early factors governing progress involve the making of roads, the carrying of main drainage and other utility services to the various new areas and in many cases to existing areas.

## **THE EARLIER DEVELOPMENT**

It is proposed to establish the Town Centre at the earliest possible moment in order to give a central identity to Telford as a whole. Major building activity should take place in the southern area - after Madeley and Stirchley districts are complete, by developing around the Town Centre, Dawley and Priorslee, then Trench and the north and north-east of Wellington. The intentions at all stages is to keep good farmland in use as long as possible.

Provision is made to encourage local authorities and private enterprise to play a vital part in creating Telford.

## **MADELEY DISTRICT**

The Madeley District Plan relates to the southern part of the New Town area. It covers some 5½ square miles and includes the existing towns of Madeley, Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale. It provides for a rapid increase in population in the area, rising from about 8,500 - the population in 1966 - to approximately 24,000 people by 1972. The district will have its own employment opportunities in new industrial estates, its own local and district shopping facilities, primary and secondary schools, health and welfare facilities, together with a wide choice in recreational and social facilities.

## **MADELEY CENTRAL AREA**

The redevelopment of Madeley Centre is now well underway.

The housing development at Mayfield, the by-pass together with the western access road from Park Street, and the first phase of the new shopping centre with its associated housing, have been completed. The shops and the County Branch Library were officially opened on 17th September, 1969.

The next two stages of the development consist of the second phase of shopping and new housing to be developed to the east and to the west respectively of the first phase of the centre.

The second phase of shopping is being developed around a pedestrian square which will be created in front of the Anstice Memorial Hall and the new square will be linked to the existing pedestrian square, around which the first shopping area is arranged. The new shops facing the Anstice Hall will be designed with canopies to give weather protection to shoppers. The new shops on the east side of the square will be grouped each side of a small enclosed mall giving pedestrian access through to the bus stop located at the junction of High Street and Court Street. Plans are in hand in association with

Dawley Urban District Council for the provision of new public conveniences to be sited between the bus stop and the entrance to the shopping area. All shops will be serviced from the rear and the present car park at the south side of the development will be increased to provide a further 60 car spaces. Some of the shops on the south side of the square in front of the Anstice Hall will consist of two storeys and over part of the remainder in the scheme, offices are planned at first floor level. The square will be paved and landscaped to create a pleasing forecourt between the Anstice Hall and the surrounding shopping. It is intended that the development will be built in mellow red brick and will be similar in character to the first phase. The accommodation to be provided in this next phase will consist of 4 two-storey shops, 5 single-storey shops with offices over 2 banks with offices over, 1 supermarket and public conveniences.

The new housing development will be located on the area of land between the western access road and the present Centre and will extend from Park Street to the by-pass. The housing will consist of three storey flats and maisonettes providing a total of 93 dwellings. The layout will be formed into three groups, the northern group and northern portion of the centre group being served off Victoria Road, which is being retained as a cul-de-sac service road on its present alignment in the short-term. The southern portion of the centre group and the group at the extreme south of the site, will be served off a new access road leading to "The Villa" from the western access road. Each housing group will be designed around landscaped courts and the surrounding areas will be landscaped and planted. Groups of garages and car park spaces will be integrated into the scheme. The three housing groups will be convenient to bus lay-bys, which will be located on the western access road, and to pedestrian ways linked directly to the shopping centre.

## **Residential**

The new residential areas Sutton Hill and Woodside - situated to the east and west of the Madeley Centre - will each accommodate about 8,000 people. The population of Madeley itself will be doubled, in effect creating a third residential area of 8,000 people. In the design of residential areas, great care has been taken to separate wherever possible, pedestrian routes from the movement of motor traffic. Also, the aim has been to locate within easy walking distance of most homes, a local centre capable of providing for people's everyday needs - shops, sub-post office, primary school, medical services, including a child welfare clinic and social facilities. It is the Corporation's declared policy to have such facilities in operation as early as possible in the development of residential areas.

## **SUTTON HILL**

The Sutton Hill area was chosen to be the site of the first major new housing development in the new town, as it was the only area for which adequate drainage facilities could be provided at an early date. It occupies relatively high ground to the south-east of Madeley and adjoins the existing Hills Lane Farm and Cuckoo Oak Estates, developed by the Local Authority, which house about 1,800 people.

The plan for Sutton Hill incorporates these estates into a residential area designed as a comprehensive social unit of about 8,000 people. This number of people is sufficient to justify the provision of a local centre capable of catering for most of the everyday needs of the community, yet given reasonable housing densities, the area is small enough for most people to live within easy walking distance of the centre.

An important feature of the layout of Sutton Hill is the footpath system providing to all parts of the area direct and pleasant walkways which, being



quite separate from the roads, are safe, particularly for children, but good vehicle accessibility to individual dwellings and to the centre is preserved by means of short culs-de-sac from Suttonway. On the assumption that car ownership in the future will continue to rise, one garage and approximately one car parking space is being provided for each dwelling, with additional off-street parking available for visitors.

### **The Local Centre**

At Sutton Hill, the first social centre was opened on 4th July, 1968, making Telford the first new town to provide such facilities so early in its development.

### **The Community Centre**

In the centre is a community centre building containing meeting rooms, coffee bar, a hall, a library, clinic, doctors' group practice surgery, dentist's surgery and a pastoral centre. There are shops - a chemists, newsagent/tobacconist, sub-post office, supermarket - a primary school, children's play centre including a two-acre adventure playground, and a public house.

The Development Corporation has a community development officer whose chief task is to advise and help the newcomers to become part of a new friendly community at Sutton Hill. The focal point of the new local centre is the coffee bar/lounge which is open to all. Here residents can meet and chat, exchange ideas over coffee or make new friends while shopping, visiting the library or attending the clinic. This coffee lounge can be used as a separate room in the evenings when the library and clinic are closed. In addition to this, there are two large rooms, intended for committee meetings and as centres where leisure activities, classes of instruction in subjects such as upholstery, dress-making and flower arranging can take place, and a smaller room for group committee meetings. Functions such as dances, social evenings, parties and wedding receptions can be held in the hall which has a portable stage and a well equipped kitchen with cooking facilities and refrigerator.

### **The Library**

A Public Library, with sections for all age groups and books for a wide variety of readers, is one of the facilities available at the Sutton Hill Local Centre.

### **Surgeries and Clinics**

Incorporated in the community centre is a wing devoted entirely to health services. The welfare clinic comprises a room for a doctor, a room for health visitors and a room for district nurses which is also a weighing room for infants. Next to the welfare clinic there are the doctors' consulting rooms and a dentist's surgery.

### **The Pastoral Centre**

The Pastoral Centre - part of the community centre building - has been financed by the Church of England - but its facilities are shared by the other denominations. There are two main rooms in the centre, one of which is used for worship, the other for meetings and classes. There is a kitchen and a smaller committee room. It is linked to the community centre, so that the church organisations can use the social buildings and vice-versa.

### **The Play Centre**

The new population has a large number of young children, and a children's

play officer - appointed by the Development Corporation - offers guidance and leadership in organised children's play schemes which are designed to supplement the provision made by home and school. Children's play is organised chiefly from the play centre which has been built to form an integral part of the local centre at Sutton Hill. The play centre has a large hall at first floor level, which is separated from other rooms and ideally suited for supervised free play activity where children can run about and make a noise, and where large play equipment can be erected. A quiet room, has been included as a room where the less boisterous child or young persons can read or play quiet games. Refreshments can be provided and there is a kitchen and serving hatch for this purpose.

### **Schools**

The Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School, next to the Local Centre, admitted its first pupils in 1968, and a second new primary school at nearby Hills Lane, has been serving the area since September, 1970. Both schools have two separate departments - infants and juniors.

### **WOODSIDE**

At Woodside, a comprehensive social unit for 8,000 people, similar to that at Sutton Hill, is being developed. There is a social centre with the Community Centre building, shops, children's play centre, health centre with child welfare. The first of the two primary schools is established next to the Local Centre.

### **INDUSTRY**

To the east of Madeley Central Area are the Tweedale and Halesfield industrial estates. Both industrial estates are accessible to Sutton Hill by footpath and cycleway and are conveniently situated with regard to the existing Wellington-Bridgnorth Road (A 442) and to a planned new road of urban motorway standard to link up with the Wolverhampton Road (A464) and the A5.

### **EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The Local Educational Authority, Salop County Council, are planning secondary education in the New Town along comprehensive lines. The Abraham Darby Comprehensive School already exists and a phased enlargement programme is in progress and there is a new comprehensive school for about 1,200 pupils opened in September, 1971. A noteworthy feature in the planning of this new school is the agreement reached between the Local Education Authority, the District Council and the Development Corporation, whereby its recreational facilities - swimming pools, sports hall and playing fields - are combined with those that would normally be provided for the general public. By this means, a wide variety of sports and recreational opportunities can be provided for anyone to use at appropriate times. As well as sports facilities, the Court Centre - opened in Summer 1971 - is designed to cater for social functions and activities. The sports and recreational buildings, which are managed by a Trust on which contributing authorities are represented, are adjacent to the school and, in addition to containing a sports hall, swimming pools and changing rooms, they will have a club and social rooms, bar lounge and a hall large enough for dancing or a banquet. A youth club, suitably furnished and equipped, is also planned. Open air facilities include six conventional playing fields, six 'shale' tennis courts, bowling green, a 3½ acre semi-porous multi sports surface, 70 yd. x 40 yd. Asphalt roller skating rink, and a 980 sq. yd. dry ski slope.

Other recreational facilities in the Madeley district area, will include a golf course near Sutton Hill overlooking the Severn Gorge and a children's adventure park about 6.28 acres in extent in the Blists Hill Valley between Sutton Hill and Madeley.

## **STIRCHLEY DISTRICT**

In order to maintain the impetus of development in the New Town, it was apparent that a start would have to be made on a second major district project before the Madeley district was completed.

The area chosen, amounting to some 900 acres, lies on the eastern side of the designated area and includes the existing village of Stirchley. It consists largely of gently undulating land mainly in agricultural use, and it offers few physical limitations to development on a large scale.

It is well placed to be served by the major road of urban motorway standard connecting the southern part of the town to the A5 and the Wolverhampton Road, the A464. Also, it is close to the Halesfield Industrial Estate to the south, providing nearby employment opportunities.

In a number of ways, the plan for this area is similar to that of the Madeley district plan, and it aims to make the area it covers self-supporting in most respects, yet capable of fitting easily into whatever form the town ultimately takes. It repeats the pattern of grouping together as a district three residential units - Stirchley, Randlay and Brookside - each housing about 8,000 people, though they are less clearly defined. The housing areas themselves are designed to separate, as far as possible, pedestrian and vehicle traffic and to provide, within five or ten minutes walk from most homes, shopping and social facilities for normal everyday requirements, either in local centres at Brookside and Randlay or in the district centre in Stirchley. This, like Madeley, is designed to cater for most of the residents' weekly shopping needs and for social and recreational requirements on a rather larger scale than is practicable in the local centres.

There are some important differences between the Stirchley and Madeley plans, largely because, unlike Madeley, there is very little existing development in Stirchley. Instead of a two-tier system, the schools in Stirchley will be based on a three-tier system with separate schools catering for the 5 - 8 age group, the 9 - 13's and the over 13's.

The district of Stirchley will contain a Health Centre providing all the normal County Health services and using the group practice accommodation for eight to ten doctors and two dentists.

A shallow ten-acre lake will form part of the surface water drainage system, and could be used for activities like dinghy sailing. A joint-use sports and recreational centre will be established based on the facilities of the new senior school that is to be built at the district centre. In concept this would be comparable with the Madeley project described earlier.

## **DAWLEY**

In planning for new development, the Development Corporation has always been aware of the keen interest and anxiety of the residents of Dawley to know what effects the coming of the New Town would have on their locality.

Over a period of many months, studies have been undertaken in co-operation with officers of the Urban District Council into various aspects of development in the vicinity of Dawley itself, and a Policy Plan has been produced. As such, it

is likely to be modified, particularly in points of detail, but broadly it shows how a third district of the new town, comparable with Madeley and Stirchley, could be developed.

## IRONBRIDGE, COALBROOKDALE AND THE SEVERN GORGE

The plans for the future of Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale and the Severn Gorge show how, in the midst of the rapidly growing new town, it would be possible to effect some improvements to roads and property where attention is needed, to undertake some limited new housing construction and by a careful programme of clearance and landscaping to develop the eastern part of the Gorge as parkland for recreational purposes for the new town and the region, providing opportunities for picnicking, camping, rambling and the like. The river itself already offers good fishing and there is the possibility of developing an aquatic centre with facilities for rowing, a staging post for long distance canoeing, boat workshops and storage, hotel accommodation and a restaurant.

Coalbrookdale itself is famous throughout the world for the part it played in the Industrial Revolution. The objectives of a specially set up Trust - The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited - are the preservation and restoration of features of special architectural and historic interest, and at Blists Hill, between Madeley and Coalbrookdale, an open-air industrial museum will be established.

## THOMAS TELFORD

Thomas Telford, born 9th August, 1757, at Westerkirk near Langholm Dumfriesshire, was the son of an Eskdale shepherd.

He served his apprenticeship as a Mason and by a coincidence of history, his first job was on the construction of what was known locally as New Town at Langholm. He was also engaged in the construction of the bridge connecting the old with the new town across the River Esk.

He left Eskdale in 1780 aged 23 years and worked in Edinburgh for two years, and by a further coincidence, he worked on the New Town which was then under construction.

At the age of 25 in 1782, he set out for London with a letter of introduction to Mr. John Pasley, a London merchant. The London merchant gave him letters of introduction to Sir William Chambers, the Architect of Somerset House - then under construction - and to Robert Adam, the Architect. Telford was engaged as a mason on the Somerset House project.

In July 1784, he became superintendent of the building of a house for the Commissioners at Portsmouth dockyard. When this was finished in 1786, Telford then looked for other work.

At that time, Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury, Mr. Pulteney, whose family also came from Eskdale and who had previously used Telford's services, wanted to fit out Shrewsbury Castle as his residence. Telford was engaged to supervise the alterations and this led to Telford's appointment as Surveyor of Public Works for the County of Salop.

The appointment as County Surveyor afforded Telford his first employment as an engineer. He completed his first bridge in 1792 over the River Severn at Montford Bridge. In the same year he designed and supervised the construction of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Bridgnorth. His two other churches, St. Michael's, Madeley and St. Leonard's, Malinslee, are in the New Town area.

He became engineer to the Ellesmere Canal Company in 1793 and it was the construction of the Ellesmere Canal which established Telford as an engineer of first-rate ability.

During the construction of the Ellesmere Canal Telford was appointed engineer to the Shrewsbury Council. In a letter dated 13th March, 1795, he wrote of the Shrewsbury Canal "Although this Canal is only 18 miles long, yet there are many important works in its course - several locks, a tunnel about half a mile long, and two aqueducts. For the most considerable of these last, I have just recommended an aqueduct of iron. It has been approved and will be executed under my direction upon a principle entirely new and which I am endeavouring to establish with regard to the application of iron." This was the aqueduct at Longden-upon-Tern, just outside the New Town area which was the first cast iron aqueduct in the world. It was this principle which he applied to the world famous aqueduct at Pontcysyllte on the Ellesmere Canal. This took 8 years to build from 1795 to 1803, at a cost of £47,018.

Telford's first iron road bridge - and third iron bridge in the world after the Iron Bridge and the Wear Bridge at Sunderland - was at Buildwas. An unusually high flood swept away the old bridge in 1795 and Telford was called upon to supply the plan of a new one.

During the time he was County Surveyor he erected 42 bridges of which 5 were of iron. One of them, Cound Bridge, was recently dismantled by Salop

County Council to make way for a new bridge. The original bridge is now in store in the New Town awaiting re-erection.

In 1802, Telford was appointed by the Government to make a survey of Scotland's roads. Subsequently, he also surveyed Scottish harbours including Wick, Aberdeen and Dundee.

In 1801, Telford had been asked to make a survey for the Caledonian Canal and work commenced in 1804. The relative failure of this canal from a commercial point of view was a great disappointment to him.

Much greater success attended the Gotha Canal in Sweden for which Telford was appointed surveyor. This connected the North Sea and the Baltic and confirmed Telford's reputation as an engineer of international and world standing. Back at home, he had also undertaken the improvement and widening of the Birmingham Canal originally constructed by Brindley. Galton Bridge - West Bromwich, Warley - over the canal is a well known Telford bridge in cast iron.

Telford was also a great road maker. His most important road improvement was the Holyhead Road following the Act of Union with Ireland. He designed the road from Shrewsbury - now the A5 - through Liangollen, Corwen, Bettws-y-Coed, Capel Curig and Bangor, to Holyhead. The bridge over the River Conway at Bettws-y-Coed, called Waterloo Bridge, is a very fine specimen of Telford's iron bridge work. After completing the road westwards from Shrewsbury, he undertook the improvement of the road between Shrewsbury and London and various other roads in Wales and the West Midlands.

Perhaps the crowning achievement was the first large suspension bridge in the world at Menai. This bridge was formally opened on 30th January, 1826, when the London and Holyhead mailcoach passed over it, followed by the Commissioners of the Holyhead roads and the engineer. It cost £120,000. The Conway Bridge, built by Telford to a similar design was opened shortly afterwards.

In the later years of his life, he undertook work at London docks. He designed Dean Bridge, Edinburgh, and Glasgow Bridge. He also carried out the drainage of the North Level of the fens.

When in London, he stayed at the Salopian Coffee House, the Ship Hotel at Charing Cross, and later took residence at 24 Abingdon Street.

A society of engineers formed in London 1818, invited Telford to accept the office of President of a proposed Engineers' Institute. This he did on 21st March, 1820. In 1828 he obtained a Charter of Incorporation for the Society which is now the Institute of Civil Engineers.

He died, unmarried, on 2nd September, 1834, aged 77 years and was buried in Westminster Abbey.