

THE NELSON MONUMENT (AREA C)

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The Statue of Horatio Nelson by Richard Westmacott, RA (1775–1856) stands in the Bull Ring. This bronze statue was the first publicly funded statue in Birmingham, and the first statue of Horatio Nelson in Britain. It was made in 1809 by public subscription of £2,500 by the people of Birmingham following Nelson's visit to the town on 31st August 1802, the year before he sailed against the fleets of Napoleon. The statue was unveiled on 25 October 1809, that being the day decreed as the official golden jubilee of George III.

Nelson stands in uniform, with his one arm resting on an anchor with the prow of a miniature ship: HMS Victory. Upon the ship is the Flag Staff Truck (part of the mast) of the French ship Orient (1791).

Monuments have been created for thousands of years and are a type of structure that was explicitly created to commemorate a person or event, or something that has become relevant to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage. Some monuments also serve to reinforce political power. The term monumentality relates to the symbolic status and physical presence of a monument.

Monuments have finite lives. While many are lost in time through events or accidental destruction, along with the passage of time and the natural forces of erosion taking its toll. However, more powerful is the force of familiarity.

Familiarity with the everyday indeed erodes the curiosity of the passers-by. There is nothing more invisible to the human eye than a monument. The remarkable thing about monuments is that in time one does not notice them.

It may be that some monuments are now unable to influence the senses of the observer. It may be that our own perceptions have changed and altered, or the areas around have become more vibrant and interesting. Lord Nelson now is competing with the iconic Selfridges Store and the Bronze Bull in the Bull Ring who holds the power to pull away the casual passer-by.
