

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	TRAFALGAR SQUARE
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	City of Westminster (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.508006 Longitude: -0.12808856 National Grid Reference: TQ 30007 80447 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1001362 Date first listed: 22-Nov-1996

Details

Laid out from the 1820s onwards as a key part of John Nash's redevelopment of the West End, Trafalgar Square was designed by William Wilkins and Sir Charles Barry to enhance the setting of the National Gallery and to connect the Strand with the West End.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The square, named Trafalgar Square in 1830, occupies the area of the former Great Mews of the Crown Stables, these having been made redundant with the building of new stabling behind Buckingham Palace in 1824-5. The site forms part of John Nash's grand scheme of Metropolitan Improvements which transformed the capital, providing the essential link between his processional route of Regent Street and the Strand. Nash (1752-1835) was invited to prepare a design for the area, which obtained parliamentary sanction through the Charing Cross Act of 1826. The square, standing at the head of Charing Cross and Whitehall, was connected by Nash to Pall Mall through the construction of Pall Mall East, and to the Strand by the West Strand development. A proposed avenue to the British Museum was not built. William Wilkins (1778-1839) was made responsible for the design of the square but after his death, Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) took over.

Due to its prominent central location, the site is frequently used for public meetings, political rallies, demonstrations, and celebrations.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Trafalgar Square lies within Westminster, 400m to the west of Hungerford Bridge, 300m west of Victoria Embankment Gardens (qv) from which it is separated by Charing Cross railway station, and 250m to the north-east of the northern tip of St James's Park (qv). The National Gallery (listed grade I), built to the designs of William Wilkins in 1832-8, defines the north side of the square. To the west is Canada House (listed grade II*), designed by Sir Robert Smirke in 1822-7 as the Union Club House and College of Physicians. Sir Herbert Baker's South Africa House (listed grade II) of 1935, which stands to the east, replaced Morley's Hotel. To the north-east lies James Gibbs' church of St Martin-in-the-Fields (listed grade I), whose imposing presence was hidden before the construction of the square. Charing Cross Road, formed by the Metropolitan Board of Works in the 1880s, provides the square with a fitting northern entrance.

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In 2003, under the 'World Squares for All' scheme, the road along the north side of the Square was closed and the area pedestrianised.

OTHER LAND Between 1840 and 1845, Barry oversaw the levelling of the sloping site and the construction of the hard landscaping including the northern terrace, stairs and retaining walls, and the central fountains set within lobed quatrefoil basins (all listed grade II*). The fountains were remodelled by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) in 1937-9, when larger fountains were installed with centrepieces by Charles Wheeler and W McMillan, as memorials to Admirals Beatty and Jellicoe.

The original surface of the square was asphalt, supplied by the Bastinne Bitumen Company. This was renewed in 1863 then, in 1926, the surface was replaced with large flagstones, these being extensively overhauled in 1987. The chequered Portland and Mansfield sandstone paving on the upper terrace is probably original.

Trafalgar Square is celebrated for its statuary, with the Nelson Monument (listed grade I), a Corinthian column of granite 44m high with a bronze capital, dominating the layout. The column was erected in 1840-3 to the designs of William Railton following a petition to the government in 1838 for the placing of a monument in this location, and two competitions for its design. The statue of Nelson which stands on top of the column is by E H Baily. The four bronze reliefs on the pedestal (depicting the Battles of St Vincent by M L Watson; the Nile by W F Woodington; Copenhagen by J Ternouth; and Trafalgar by J E Carew) were affixed in 1852; the lions, designed by Sir Edwin Landseer and modelled by Baron Marochetti, are later additions of 1868. Two granite plinths flank the northernmost pair of lions, that to the east bearing a bronze statue (listed grade II) of Major-General Sir Henry Havelock (d 1857) by Edward Behnes, 1861; that to the west (listed grade II) one of General Sir Charles Napier (d 1853) by G G Adams, 1855. A statue of General Kitchener (d 1885) by Hamo Thornycroft, unveiled in 1888, formerly stood between the fountain basins but was removed in 1943 to make way, temporarily, for an Avro Lancaster bomber. The statue now stands within Victoria Embankment Gardens.

On a pedestal at the north-east corner of the Square is an equestrian statue of George IV (listed grade II) by Sir Francis Chantrey, erected here in 1844 but originally intended for Nash's Marble Arch. Its pair, the pedestal at the north-west corner of the square, remains (1999) vacant. Busts of Admirals Beatty, Jellicoe (both by Wheeler and W McMillan) and Cunningham are set against the northern terrace wall, the first two erected in 1948, that of Admiral Cunningham being added subsequently. Between the busts is a set of Imperial Standards of Lengths (listed grade II*), fashioned in bronze and indicating yards, chains, perches, and poles, mounted here by the Board of Trade in 1876.

REFERENCES

LCC, Survey of London XX, (1940) H Clunn, *The Face of London* (1951), pp 152-5 J M Crook and M H Port, *The History of the King's Works VI*, (1973), pp 491-4 R Mace, *Trafalgar Square* (1976) G Stamp, *The Changing Metropolis* (1984), pp 88-99 R Bowdler, *Inspector's Report*, (English Heritage 1996)

Description written: March 1999; amended November 2003 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: January 2002

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.