



Nelson's Tower
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Nelson's Tower, situated on the top of Cluny Hill, Forres, was built as a memorial to Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson in 1806.

After his victory over Napoleon's fleet at Cape Trafalgar in Spain, 21st October 1805, Nelson became a national hero. Nelson was killed during the battle and various memorials were set up around the country, including Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, London and Nelson's Monument on Carlton Hill, Edinburgh.

In 1806, the community of Forres began building its own memorial tower to Nelson on Cluny Hill. Designed as a 'monument to departed heroism', it was paid for through subscription which was organised by prominent members of the community. Approximately £610 was raised from 269 subscribers.

On the 26th August 1806, James Brodie of Brodie laid the foundation, as part of a ceremony attended by all the prominent inhabitants of Forres and the surrounding district. Coins and a parchment scroll were placed under the foundation stone, and after a speech and a prayer, the Forres Volunteers fired three volleys in the air and the procession returned to Forres for a celebration at Maclean's Inn on the High Street.

The tower was not actually completed until six years later, and was officially opened on the seventh anniversary of Nelson's victory. The octagonal tower, which dominates the Forres skyline, stands at 70 feet (21 metres) high and from the viewing gallery there is a spectacular view of the Moray Firth to the North, and the Grampian Mountains to the South. There are three floors, connected by a spiral staircase, and the tower has a diameter of 24 feet (8 metres). On the exterior of the tower there are a number of inscribed panels, which commemorate the battles of Trafalgar, the

Nile and Copenhagen, and two cannons sit at its entrance. The tower also contains a marble memorial to the memory of the men, from Forres and the surrounding district, who died in the South African War. This memorial was unveiled in 1905 by the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Lord Lieutenant of Moray.

On the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1807, many of the subscribers to Nelson's monument formed the 'Trafalgar Club' and arranged to meet annually on 21st October, in order to celebrate Nelson's victory. The first meeting was held at Maclean's Inn, James Brodie of Brodie being in the chair. Subsequent meetings were held in Nelson's Tower, until gradually over the years, the club met less frequently as the original enthusiasm faded. Eventually in 1851 the Trafalgar Club transferred all its assets to Forres Town Council, who became guardians of the tower and its artefacts. In 1975 it passed to the Moray District Council.

Many of the artefacts that belonged to the Trafalgar Club can be seen in the Falconer Museum, Tolbooth Street, and Forres. These include a snuffbox modelled on the death mask of Nelson, which was passed around the members of the Trafalgar Club before each meeting; an elegant silver cup, commemorating Nelson's victories, presented to the club by the Duke of Gordon; a chamber pot decorated with a bust of Napoleon (which was used as a spittoon); and a punch bowl decorated with a picture of Napoleon and Nelson looking at each other in a menacing manner.

Opening Times: April – September
Tues. – Sun 2.00pm – 4.00pm
Free Admission

Further Reading:

Douglas, R (1934) Annals of the Royal Burgh of Forres
Marriott, L (1995) What's Left of Nelson (Dial House: Surrey)
White, C (ed.) (1995) The Nelson Companion (Naval Institute Press: USA)
Williams, D (2000) Horatio Nelson (The Larks Press: Norfolk)