

= Nelson 's Pillar =

Nelson 's Pillar (also known as the Nelson Pillar or simply The Pillar) was a large granite column capped by a statue of Horatio Nelson , built in the centre of what was then Sackville Street (later renamed O 'Connell Street) in Dublin , Ireland . Completed in 1809 when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom , it survived until March 1966 , when it was severely damaged by explosives planted by Irish republicans . Its remnants were later destroyed by the Irish Army .

The decision to build the monument was taken by Dublin Corporation in the euphoria following Nelson 's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 . The original design by William Wilkins was greatly modified by Francis Johnston , on grounds of cost . The statue was sculpted by Thomas Kirk . From its opening on 29 October 1809 the Pillar was a popular tourist attraction , but provoked aesthetic and political controversy from the outset . A prominent city centre monument honouring an Englishman rankled as nationalist sentiment grew , and throughout the 19th century there were calls for it to be removed , or replaced with a memorial to an Irish hero .

Parts of central Dublin were destroyed during the 1916 Easter Rising , but although it was near the rebels ' headquarters , the Pillar remained unscathed . It remained in the city as Ireland became an independent Free State in 1922 , and a republic in 1949 . The chief legal barrier to its removal was the trust created at the Pillar 's inception , the terms of which gave the trustees a duty in perpetuity to preserve the monument . Successive Irish governments failed to deliver legislation overriding the trust . Although influential literary figures such as James Joyce , W. B. Yeats and Oliver St. John Gogarty defended the Pillar on historical and cultural grounds , pressure for its removal intensified in the years preceding the 50th anniversary of the Rising , and its sudden demise was , on the whole , well received by the public . Although it was widely believed that the action was the work of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) , the police were unable to identify any of those responsible .

After years of debate and numerous proposals , the site was occupied in 2003 by the Spire of Dublin , a slim needle @-@ like structure rising almost three times the height of the Pillar . In 2000 a former republican activist gave a radio interview in which he admitted planting the explosives in 1966 , but after questioning him the police decided not to take action . Relics of the Pillar are found in Dublin museums and appear as decorative stonework elsewhere , and its memory is preserved in numerous works of Irish literature .

= = Background = =

= = = Sackville Street and Blakeney = = =

The redevelopment of Dublin north of the River Liffey began in the early 18th century , largely through the enterprise of the property speculator Luke Gardiner . His best @-@ known work was the transformation in the 1740s of a narrow lane called Drogheda Street , which he demolished and turned into a broad thoroughfare lined with large and imposing town houses . He renamed it Sackville Street , in honour of Lionel Sackville , 1st Duke of Dorset , who served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1731 to 1737 and from 1751 to 1755 . After Gardiner 's death in 1755 Dublin 's growth continued , with many fine public buildings and grand squares , the city 's status magnified by the presence of the Parliament of Ireland for six months of the year . The Acts of Union of 1800 , which united Ireland and Great Britain under a single Westminster polity , ended the Irish parliament and presaged a period of decline for the city . The historian Tristram Hunt writes : " [T] he capital 's dynamism vanished , absenteeism returned and the big houses lost their patrons " .

The first monument in Sackville Street was built in 1759 in the location where the Nelson Pillar would eventually stand . The subject was William Blakeney , 1st Baron Blakeney , a Limerick @-@ born army officer whose career extended over more than 60 years and ended with his surrender to the French after the Siege of Minorca in 1756 . A brass statue sculpted by John van Nost the younger was unveiled on St Patrick 's Day , 17 March 1759 . Donal Fallon , in his history of the Pillar , states that almost from its inception the Blakeney statue was a target for vandalism . Its fate is

uncertain ; Fallon records that it might have been melted down for cannon , but it had certainly been removed by 1805 .

= = = Trafalgar = = =

On 21 October 1805 , a Royal Naval fleet commanded by Vice Admiral Lord Nelson defeated the combined fleets of the French and Spanish navies in the Battle of Trafalgar . At the height of the battle Nelson was mortally wounded on board his flagship , HMS Victory ; by the time he died later that day , victory was assured .

Nelson had been hailed in Dublin seven years earlier , after the Battle of the Nile , as defender of the Harp and Crown , the respective symbols of Ireland and Britain . When news of Trafalgar reached the city on 8 November , there were similar scenes of patriotic celebration , together with a desire that the fallen hero should be commemorated . The mercantile classes had particular reason to be grateful for a victory that restored the freedom of the high seas and removed the threat of a French invasion . Many of the city 's population had relatives who had been involved in the battle : up to one @-@ third of the sailors in Nelson 's fleet were from Ireland , including around 400 from Dublin itself . In his short account of the Pillar , Dennis Kennedy considers that Nelson would have been regarded in the city as a hero , not just among the Protestant Ascendancy but by many Catholics among the rising middle and professional classes .

The first step towards a permanent memorial to Nelson was taken on 18 November 1805 by the city aldermen , who after sending a message of congratulation to King George III , agreed that the erection of a statue would form a suitable tribute to Nelson 's memory . On 28 November , after a public meeting had supported this sentiment , a " Nelson committee " was established , chaired by the Lord Mayor . It contained four of the city 's Westminster MPs , alongside other city notables including Arthur Guinness , the son of the brewery founder . The committee 's initial tasks were to decide precisely what form the monument should take and where it should be put . They had also to raise the funds to pay for it .

= = Inception , design and construction = =

At its first meeting the Nelson committee established a public subscription , and early in 1806 invited artists and architects to submit design proposals for a monument . No specifications were provided , but the contemporary European vogue in commemorative architecture was for the classical form , typified by Trajan 's Column in Rome . Monumental columns , or " pillars of victory " , were uncommon in Ireland at the time ; the Cumberland Column in Birr , County Offaly , erected in 1747 , was a rare exception . From the entries submitted , the Nelson committee 's choice was that of a young English architect , William Wilkins , then in the early stages of a distinguished career . Wilkins 's proposals envisaged a tall Doric column on a plinth , surmounted by a sculpted Roman galley .

The choice of the Sackville Street site was not unanimous . The Wide Streets Commissioners were worried about traffic congestion , and argued for a riverside location visible from the sea . Another suggestion was for a seaside position , perhaps Howth Head at the entrance to Dublin Bay . The recent presence of the Blakeney statue in Sackville Street , and a desire to arrest the street 's decline in the post @-@ parliamentary years , were factors that may have influenced the final selection of that site which , Kennedy says , was the preferred choice of the Lord Lieutenant .

By mid @-@ 1807 , fundraising was proving difficult ; sums raised at that point were well short of the likely cost of erecting Wilkins 's column . The committee informed the architect with regret that " means were not placed in their hands to enable them to gratify him , as well as themselves , by executing his design precisely as he had given it " . They employed Francis Johnston , architect to the City Board of Works , to make cost @-@ cutting adjustments to Wilkins 's scheme . Johnston simplified the design , substituting a large functional block or pedestal for Wilkins 's delicate plinth , and replacing the proposed galley with a statue of Nelson . Thomas Kirk , a sculptor from Cork , was commissioned to provide the statue , to be fashioned from Portland stone .

By December 1807 the fund stood at £ 3 @, @ 827 , far short of the estimated £ 6 @, @ 500 required to finance the project . Nevertheless , by the beginning of 1808 the committee felt confident enough to begin the work , and organised the laying of the foundation stone . This ceremony took place on 15 February 1808 ? the day following the anniversary of Nelson 's victory at the Battle of Cape St Vincent in 1797 ? amid much pomp , in the presence of the new Lord Lieutenant , the Duke of Richmond , along with various civic dignitaries and city notables . A memorial plaque eulogising Nelson 's Trafalgar victory was attached to the stone . The committee continued to raise money as construction proceeded ; when the project was complete in the autumn of 1809 , costs totalled £ 6 @, @ 856 , but contributions had reached £ 7 @, @ 138 , providing the committee with a surplus of £ 282 .

When finished , the monument complete with its statue rose to a height of 134 feet (40 @. @ 8 m) . The four sides of the pedestal were engraved with the names and dates of Nelson 's greatest victories . A spiral stairway of 168 steps ascended the hollow interior of the column , to a viewing platform immediately beneath the statue . According to the committee 's published report , 22 @, @ 090 cubic feet (626 m³) of black limestone and 7 @, @ 310 cubic feet (207 m³) of granite had been used to build the column and its pedestal . The Pillar opened to the public on 21 October 1809 , on the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar ; for ten pre @-@ decimal pence , visitors could climb to a viewing platform just below the statue , and enjoy what an early report describes as " a superb panoramic view of the city , the country and the fine bay " .

= = History 1809 ? 1966 = =

= = = 1809 ? 1916 = = =

The Pillar quickly became a popular tourist attraction ; Kennedy writes that " for the next 157 years its ascent was a must on every visitor 's list " . Yet from the beginning there were criticisms , on both political and aesthetic grounds . The September 1809 issue of the Irish Monthly Magazine , edited by the revolution @-@ minded Walter " Watty " Cox , reported that " our independence has been wrested from us , not by the arms of France but by the gold of England . The statue of Nelson records the glory of a mistress and the transformation of our senate into a discount office " . In an early (1818) history of the city of Dublin , the writers express awe at the scale of the monument , but are critical of several of its features : its proportions are described as " ponderous " , the pedestal as " unsightly " and the column itself as " clumsy " . However , the Hibernian Magazine thought the statue was a good likeness of its subject , and that the Pillar 's position in the centre of the wide street gave the eye a focal point in what was otherwise " wastes of pavements " .

By 1830 , rising nationalist sentiment in Ireland made it likely that the Pillar was " the Ascendancy 's last hurrah " ? Kennedy observes that it probably could not have been built at any later date . Nevertheless , the monument often attracted favourable comment from visitors ; in 1842 the writer William Makepeace Thackeray noted Nelson " upon a stone @-@ pillar " in the middle of the " exceedingly broad and handsome " Sackville Street : " The Post Office is on his right hand (only it is cut off) ; and on his left , ' Gresham 's ' and the ' Imperial Hotel ' " . A few years later , the monument was a source of pride to some citizens , who dubbed it " Dublin 's Glory " when Queen Victoria visited the city in 1849 .

Between 1840 and 1843 Nelson 's Column was erected in London 's Trafalgar Square . With an overall height of 170 feet (52 m) it was taller than its Dublin equivalent and , at £ 47 @, @ 000 , much more costly to erect . It has no internal staircase or viewing platform . The London column was the subject of an attack during the Fenian dynamite campaign in May 1884 , when a quantity of explosives was placed at its base but failed to detonate .

In 1853 the queen attended the Dublin Great Industrial Exhibition , where a city plan was displayed that envisaged the removal of the Pillar . This proved impossible , as since 1811 legal responsibility for the Pillar had been vested in a trust , under the terms of which the trustees were required " to embellish and uphold the monument in perpetuation of the object for which it was subscribed " . Any

action to remove or resite the Pillar , or replace the statue , required the passage of an Act of Parliament in London ; Dublin Corporation (the city government) had no authority in the matter . No action followed the city plan suggestion , but the following years saw regular attempts to remove the monument . A proposal was made in 1876 by Alderman Peter McSwiney , a former Lord Mayor , to replace the " unsightly structure " with a memorial to the recently deceased Sir John Gray , who had done much to provide Dublin with a clean water supply . The Corporation was unable to advance this idea .

In 1882 the Moore Street Market and Dublin City Improvement Act was passed by the Westminster parliament , overriding the trust and giving the Corporation authority to resite the Pillar , but subject to a strict timetable , within which the city authorities found it impossible to act . The Act lapsed and the Pillar remained ; a similar attempt , with the same result , was made in 1891 . Not all Dubliners favoured demolition ; some businesses considered the Pillar to be the city 's focal point , and the tramway company petitioned for its retention as it marked the central tram terminus . " In many ways " , says Fallon , " the pillar had become part of the fabric of the city " . Kennedy writes : " A familiar and very large if rather scruffy piece of the city 's furniture , it was The Pillar , Dublin 's Pillar rather than Nelson 's Pillar ... it was also an outing , an experience " . The Dublin sculptor John Hughes invited students at the Metropolitan School of Art to " admire the elegance and dignity " of Kirk 's statue , " and the beauty of the silhouette " .

In 1894 there were some significant alterations to the Pillar 's fabric . The original entry on the west side , whereby visitors entered the pedestal by a flight of steps taking them down below street level , was replaced by a new ground level entrance on the south side , with a grand porch . The whole monument was surrounded by heavy iron railings . In the new century , despite the growing nationalism within Dublin ? 80 per cent of the Corporation 's councillors were nationalists of some description ? the pillar was liberally decorated with flags and streamers to mark the 1905 Trafalgar centenary . The changing political atmosphere had long been signalled by the arrival in Sackville Street of further monuments , all celebrating distinctively Irish heroes , in what the historian Yvonne Whelan describes as defiance of the British Government , a " challenge in stone " . Between the 1860s and 1911 , Nelson was joined by monuments to Daniel O 'Connell , William Smith O 'Brien and Charles Stewart Parnell , as well as Sir John Gray and the temperance campaigner Father Matthew . Meanwhile , in 1861 , after decades of construction , the Wellington Monument in Dublin 's Phoenix Park was completed , the foundation stone having been laid in 1817 . This vast obelisk , 220 feet (67 m) high and 120 feet (37 m) square at the base , honoured Arthur Wellesley , 1st Duke of Wellington , Dublin @-@ born and a former Chief Secretary for Ireland . Unlike the Pillar , Wellington 's obelisk has attracted little controversy and has not been the subject of physical attacks .

= = = Easter Rising , April 1916 = = =

On Easter Monday , 24 April 1916 , units of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army seized several prominent buildings and streets in central Dublin , including the General Post Office (GPO) in Sackville Street , one of the buildings nearest the Pillar . They set up headquarters at the GPO where they declared an Irish Republic under a provisional government . One of the first recorded actions of the Easter Rising occurred near the Pillar when lancers from the nearby Marlborough Street barracks , sent to investigate the disturbance , were fired on from the GPO . They withdrew in confusion , leaving four soldiers and two horses dead .

During the days that followed , Sackville Street and particularly the area around the Pillar became a battleground . According to some histories , insurgents attempted to blow up the Pillar . The accounts are unconfirmed and were disputed by many that fought in the Rising , on the grounds that the Pillar 's large base provided them with useful cover as they moved to and from other rebel positions . By Thursday night , British artillery fire had set much of Sackville Street ablaze , but according to the writer Peter De Rosa 's account : " On his pillar , Nelson surveyed it all serenely , as though he were lit up by a thousand lamps " . The statue was visible against the fiery backdrop from as far as Killiney , 9 miles (14 km) away .

By Saturday , when the provisional government finally surrendered , many of the Sackville Street buildings between the Pillar and the Liffey had been destroyed or badly damaged , including the Imperial Hotel that Thackeray had admired . Of the GPO , only the façade remained ; against the tide of opinion Bernard Shaw said the demolition of the city 's classical architecture scarcely mattered : " What does matter is the Liffey slums have not been demolished " . An account in a New York newspaper reported that the Pillar had been lost in the destruction of the street , but it had sustained only minor damage , chiefly bullet marks on the column and statue itself ? one shot is said to have taken off Nelson 's nose .

= = = In an independent Ireland = = =

After the Anglo @-@ Irish war of 1919 ? 21 and the treaty that followed , Ireland was partitioned ; Dublin became the capital of the Irish Free State , a Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations . From December 1922 , when the Free State was inaugurated , the Pillar became an issue for the Irish rather than the British government . In 1923 , when Sackville Street was again in ruins during the Irish Civil War , The Irish Builder and Engineer magazine called the original siting of the Pillar a " blunder " and asked for its removal , a view echoed by the Dublin Citizens Association . The poet William Butler Yeats , who had become a member of the Irish Senate , favoured its re @-@ erection elsewhere , but thought it should not , as some wished , be destroyed , because " the life and work of the people who built it are part of our tradition . "

Sackville Street was renamed O 'Connell Street in 1924 . The following year the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the Dublin Civic Survey demanded legislation to allow the Pillar 's removal , without success . Pressure continued , and in 1926 The Manchester Guardian reported that the Pillar was to be taken down , " as it was a hindrance to modern traffic " . Requests for action ? removal , destruction or the replacement of the statue with that of an Irish hero ? continued up to the Second World War and beyond ; the main stumbling blocks remained the trustees ' strict interpretation of the terms of the trust , and the unwillingness of successive Irish governments to take legislative action . In 1936 the magazine of the ultra @-@ nationalist Blueshirts movement remarked that this inactivity showed a failure in the national spirit : " The conqueror is gone , but the scars which he left remain , and the victim will not even try to remove them " .

By 1949 the Irish Free State had evolved into the Republic of Ireland and left the British Commonwealth , but not all Irish opinion favoured the removal of the Pillar . That year the architectural historian John Harvey called it " a grand work " , and argued that without it , " O 'Connell Street would lose much of its vitality " . Most of the pressure to get rid of it , he said , came from " traffic maniacs who ... fail to visualise the chaos which would result from creating a through current of traffic at this point " . In a 1955 radio broadcast Thomas Bodkin , former director of the National Gallery of Ireland , praised not only the monument , but Nelson himself : " He was a man of extraordinary gallantry . He lost his eye fighting bravely , and his arm in a similar fashion " .

On 29 October 1955 , a group of nine students from University College Dublin obtained keys from the Pillar 's custodian and locked themselves inside , with an assortment of equipment including flame throwers . From the gallery they hung a poster of Kevin Barry , a Dublin Irish Republican Army (IRA) volunteer executed by the British during the War of Independence . A crowd gathered below , and began to sing the Irish rebel song " Kevin Barry " . Eventually members of the Gardaí (Irish police) broke into the Pillar and ended the demonstration . No action was taken against the students , whose principal purpose , the Gardaí claimed , was publicity .

In 1956 , members of the Fianna Fáil party , then in opposition , proposed that the statue be replaced by one of Robert Emmet , Protestant leader of an abortive rebellion in 1803 . They thought that such a gesture might inspire Protestants in Northern Ireland to fight for a reunited Ireland . In the North the possibility of dismantling and re @-@ erecting the monument in Belfast was raised in the Stormont parliament , but the initiative failed to gain the support of the Northern Ireland government .

In 1959 a new Fianna Fáil government under Seán Lemass deferred the question of the Pillar 's removal on the grounds of cost ; five years later Lemass agreed to " look at " the question of

replacing Nelson 's statue with one of Patrick Pearse , the leader of the Easter Rising , in time for the 50th anniversary of the Rising in 1966 . An offer from the Irish @-@ born American trade union leader Mike Quill to finance the removal of the Pillar was not taken up , and as the anniversary approached , Nelson remained in place .

= = Destruction = =

Shortly after 1 : 30 on the morning of 8 March 1966 , a powerful explosion destroyed the upper portion of the Pillar and brought Nelson 's statue crashing to the ground amid hundreds of tons of rubble . O 'Connell Street was almost deserted at the time , although a dance in the nearby Hotel Metropole 's ballroom was about to end and bring crowds on to the street . There were no casualties ? a taxi @-@ driver parked close by had a narrow escape ? and damage to property was relatively light given the strength of the blast . What was left of the Pillar was a jagged stump , 70 feet (21 m) high .

In the first government response to the action the Justice minister , Brian Lenihan , condemned what he described as " an outrage which was planned and committed without any regard to the lives of the citizens " . This response was considered " tepid " by The Irish Times , whose editorial deemed the attack " a direct blow to the prestige of the state and the authority of the government " . Kennedy suggests that government anger was mainly directed at what they considered a distraction from the official 50th anniversary celebrations of the Rising .

The absence of the pillar was regretted by some who felt the city had lost one of its most prominent landmarks . The Irish Literary Association was anxious that , whatever future steps were taken , the lettering on the pedestal should be preserved ; the Irish Times reported that the Royal Irish Academy of Music was considering legal measures to prevent removal of the remaining stump . Reactions among the general public were relatively light @-@ hearted , typified by the numerous songs inspired by the incident . These included the immensely popular " Up Went Nelson " , set to the tune of " The Battle Hymn of the Republic " and performed by a group of Belfast schoolteachers , which remained at the top of the Irish charts for eight weeks . An American newspaper reported that the mood in the city was one of gaiety , with shouts of " Nelson has lost his last battle ! " Some accounts relate that the Irish president , Éamon de Valera , phoned The Irish Press to suggest the headline : " British Admiral Leaves Dublin By Air " ? according to the senator and presidential candidate David Norris , " the only recorded instance of humour in that lugubrious figure " .

The Pillar 's fate was sealed when Dublin Corporation issued a " dangerous building " notice . The trustees agreed that the stump should be removed . A last @-@ minute request by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland for an injunction to delay the demolition on planning grounds was rejected by Justice Thomas Teevan . On 14 March the Army destroyed the stump by a controlled explosion , watched at a safe distance by a crowd who , the press reported , " raised a resounding cheer " . There was a scramble for souvenirs , and many parts of the stonework were taken from the scene . Some of these relics , including Nelson 's head , eventually found their way into museums ; parts of the lettered stonework from the pedestal are displayed in the grounds of the Butler House hotel in Kilkenny , while smaller remnants were used to decorate private gardens . Contemporary and subsequent accounts record that the army 's explosion caused more damage than the first , but this , Fallon says , is a myth ; damage claims arising from the second explosion amounted to less than a quarter of the sum claimed as a result of the original blast .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Investigations = = =

It was initially assumed that the monument was destroyed by the IRA . The Guardian reported on 9 March that six men had been arrested and questioned , but their identities were not revealed and there were no charges . An IRA spokesman denied involvement , stating that they had no interest in

demolishing mere symbols of foreign domination : " We are interested in the destruction of the domination itself " . In the absence of any leads , rumours suggested that the Basque separatist movement ETA might be responsible , perhaps as part of a training exercise with an Irish republican splinter group ; in the mid @-@ 1960s the explosives expertise of ETA was generally acknowledged .

No further information was forthcoming until 2000 , when during a Raidió Teilifís Éireann interview a former IRA member , Liam Sutcliffe claimed he had placed the bomb which detonated in the Pillar . In the 1950s Sutcliffe was associated with a group of dissident volunteers led by Joe Christle (1927 ? 98) , who had been expelled from the IRA in 1956 for " recklessness " . In early 1966 Sutcliffe learned that Christle 's group was planning " Operation Humpty Dumpty " , an attack on the Pillar , and offered his services . According to Sutcliffe , on 28 February he placed a bomb within the Pillar , timed to go off in the early hours of the next morning . The explosive was a mixture of gelignite and ammonal . It failed to detonate ; Sutcliffe says that he returned early the next morning , recovered the device and redesigned its timer . On 7 March , shortly before the Pillar closed for the day , he climbed the inner stairway and placed the refurbished bomb near to the top of the shaft before going home . He learned of the success of his mission the next day , he says , having slept undisturbed through the night . Following his revelations , Sutcliffe was questioned by the police but not charged . He did not name others involved in the action , apart from Christle and his brother .

= = = Replacements = = =

On 29 April 1969 the Irish parliament passed the Nelson Pillar Act , terminating the Pillar Trust and vesting ownership of the site in Dublin Corporation . The trustees received £ 21 @,@ 170 in compensation for the Pillar 's destruction , and a further sum for loss of income . In the debate , Senator Owen Sheehy @-@ Skeffington argued that the Pillar had been capable of repair and should have been re @-@ assembled and rebuilt .

For more than twenty years the site stood empty , while various campaigns sought to fill the space . In 1970 the Arthur Griffith Society suggested a monument to Arthur Griffith , founder of Sinn Féin , and Pearse , whose centenary would fall in 1979 , was the subject of several proposals . None of these schemes were accepted by the Corporation . A request in 1987 by the Dublin Metropolitan Streets Commission that the Pillar be rebuilt ? with a different statue ? was likewise rejected . In 1988 , as part of the city 's 1,000th anniversary celebrations , the Smurfit Millennium Fountain was erected close to the site . This was commissioned by a Dublin businessman Michael Smurfit in memory of his father ; it incorporated a bronze statue of a woman , sculpted by Éamonn O 'Doherty . The monument , known colloquially as the Anna Livia , was not universally appreciated ; O 'Doherty 's fellow @-@ sculptor Edward Delaney called it an " atrocious eyesore " .

1988 saw the launch of the Pillar Project , aimed at encouraging artists and architects to bring forward new ideas for an appropriate permanent memorial to replace Nelson . Suggestions included a 110 metres (360 ft) flagpole , a triumphal arch modelled on the Paris Arc de Triomphe , and a " Tower of Light " with a platform that would restore Nelson 's view over the city . In 1997 Dublin Corporation announced a formal design competition for a monument to mark the new millennium in 2000 . The winning entry was Ian Ritchie 's Spire of Dublin , a plain , needle @-@ like structure rising 120 metres (390 ft) from the street . The design was approved ; on 22 January 2003 it was completed , despite some political and artistic opposition . During the excavations preceding the Spire 's construction , the foundation stone of the Nelson Pillar was recovered . Press stories that a time capsule containing valuable coins had also been discovered fascinated the public for a while , but proved illusory .

= = Cultural references = =

The destruction of the Pillar brought a temporary glut of popular songs , including " Nelson 's Farewell " , by The Dubliners , in which Nelson 's airborne demise is presented as Ireland 's contribution to the space race . During its more than 150 years , the Pillar was an integral if

controversial part of Dublin life , and was often reflected in Irish literature of the period . James Joyce 's novel Ulysses (1922) is a meticulous depiction of the city on a single day , 16 July 1904 . At the base of the Pillar trams from all parts of the city come and go ; meanwhile the character Stephen Dedalus fantasises a scene involving two elderly spinsters , who climb the steps to the viewing gallery where they eat plums and spit the stones down on those below , while gazing up at " the one @-@ handled adulterer " .

Joyce shared Yeats 's view that Ireland 's association with England was an essential element in a shared history , and asked : " Tell me why you think I ought to change the conditions that gave Ireland and me a shape and a destiny ? " Oliver St. John Gogarty , in his literary memoir *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* , considers the Pillar " the grandest thing we have in Dublin " , where " the statue in whiter stone gazed forever south towards Trafalgar and the Nile " . That Pillar , says Gogarty , " marks the end of a civilization , the culmination of the great period of eighteenth century Dublin " . Yeats 's 1927 poem " The Three Monuments " has Parnell , Nelson and O 'Connell on their respective monuments , mocking Ireland 's post @-@ independence leaders for their rigid morality and lack of courage , the obverse of the qualities of the " three old rascals " . A later writer , Brendan Behan , in his *Confessions of an Irish Rebel* (1965) wrote from a nationalist perspective that Ireland owed Nelson nothing and that Dublin 's poor regarded the Pillar as " a gibe at their own helplessness in their own country " . In his poem " Dublin " (1939) , written as the remaining vestiges of British overlordship were being removed from Ireland , Louis MacNeice envisages " Nelson on his pillar / Watching his world collapse " . Austin Clarke 's 1957 poem " Nelson 's Pillar , Dublin " scorns the various schemes to remove the monument and concludes " Let him watch the sky / With those who rule . Stone eye / And telescopes can prove / Our blessings are above " .

===== Books =====

===== Newspapers and journals =====

===== Online =====