# George Washington statue in Trafalgar Square shines anew ahead of US independence anniversary



Standing in Trafalgar Square, a gleaming statue of George Washington has been unveiled after extensive restoration, marking a significant moment in the celebration of the enduring friendship between the United States and the United Kingdom. The restoration project culminated in a ceremony attended by high-profile figures from both sides of the Atlantic, including the Governor of Virginia, Glenn Youngkin, who flew in alongside his wife, Suzanne. The event took place in the lead-up to President Donald Trump’s anticipated state visit to London and coincides with preparations for the 250th anniversary of American independence next year.

The statue, originally a gift from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1914, has stood opposite Lord Nelson's column since being erected in 1921. It was placed on a special bed of Virginian soil, reflecting the longstanding lore that Washington vowed never to set foot on British soil—an anecdote that officials acknowledge as more symbolic than factual. During the restoration, the statue was carefully kept off the ground, adhering to this tradition, but now fresh Virginian soil will be sprinkled around its base to renew the connection.

This rededication marks the first major restoration of the statue in over a century, led by the nonprofit Friends of the Washington Statue in collaboration with English Heritage and renowned architect Norman Foster, who has contributed to redesigning the statue’s pedestal. The foundation stones remain unchanged, but the inscriptions on the Portland Stone plinth have been refreshed to better tell Washington’s story and his symbolic significance. New engravings now celebrate “Enduring Friendship 2025,” “Our Common Ideals and Principles,” and “Our Common Sacrifices,” ensuring the statue’s message resonates with contemporary audiences as well as passers-by who may have previously been unaware of its importance.

Speakers at the ceremony, including former Prime Minister Baroness May and Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, highlighted the "special relationship" between the UK and the US—a phrase echoed by the new US Ambassador to Britain, Warren Stephens, who described the relationship as one born in conflict but nurtured into a beacon of peace. Yet, there was also a light-hearted warning from Lord Mandelson, joking that Washington “might not stay looking spotless for long” due to the attention of local pigeons, a humorous nod to the realities of outdoor statues.

The statue originally commemorated the centennial of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, symbolising reconciliation and shared values after years of conflict. At its unveiling in 1921 by foreign secretary Lord Curzon, Washington was described as “one of the greatest Englishmen who ever lived,” a testament to his dual legacy as both a rebel and a figure embodying ideals treasured on both sides of the Atlantic.

The restoration and forthcoming rededication in summer 2025, timed to coincide with the 104th anniversary of the statue’s unveiling, serve as a tribute to the historical and cultural ties that bind the US and the UK. By preserving and renewing this iconic monument, the Friends of the Washington Statue aim to ensure that the lesson of enduring friendship Washington symbolizes continues to inspire future generations.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.military.com/history/why-statue-of-george-washington-londons-trafalgar-square-was-taken-down.html), [[4]](https://washingtonstatue.org/celebration/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.alamy.com/statue-of-george-washington-in-trafalgar-square-london-replica-of-the-original-by-jean-antoine-houdon-given-by-the-commonwealth-of-virginia-in-1921-image365227549.html), [[7]](https://washingtonstatue.org/history/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://washingtonstatue.org/project/), [[3]](https://washingtonstatue.org/), [[4]](https://washingtonstatue.org/celebration/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://washingtonstatue.org/history/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://washingtonstatue.org/project/), [[3]](https://washingtonstatue.org/), [[4]](https://washingtonstatue.org/celebration/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14826913/Gleaming-George-Trafalgar-Square-US.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://washingtonstatue.org/project/> - The Friends of the Washington Statue (FWS) are undertaking a restoration project for the historic George Washington Statue in London's Trafalgar Square. The statue, a gift from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1914, has stood for over a century and requires significant restoration and a new pedestal. FWS aims to complete the restoration and rededicate the statue in the summer of 2025, coinciding with the 104th anniversary of its original unveiling on June 30, 1921. The project also seeks to celebrate the 'Special Relationship' between the United States and the United Kingdom.
3. <https://washingtonstatue.org/> - Friends of the Washington Statue (FWS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the historic George Washington Statue in London's Trafalgar Square. The statue, a gift from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1914, commemorates the 'Special Relationship' between the United States and the United Kingdom. FWS plans to rededicate the statue in the summer of 2025, ahead of the 250th anniversary of American independence in 2026. The organization is working with English Heritage and renowned architect Norman Foster to design a new pedestal and ensure the statue's preservation for future generations.
4. <https://washingtonstatue.org/celebration/> - As part of the restoration project for the George Washington Statue in London's Trafalgar Square, Friends of the Washington Statue (FWS) is planning a rededication ceremony in the summer of 2025. This event will celebrate the 'Special Relationship' between the United States and the United Kingdom and mark the 104th anniversary of the statue's original unveiling on June 30, 1921. The ceremony aims to honor the enduring friendship and shared values between the two nations.
5. <https://www.military.com/history/why-statue-of-george-washington-londons-trafalgar-square-was-taken-down.html> - In May 2025, the George Washington Statue in London's Trafalgar Square was removed for restoration work, the first such effort in over a century. The statue, a gift from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1921, is undergoing a full restoration process and is expected to return to its location in early June 2025, in time for its rededication on June 18, 2025. The restoration is being conducted by the Virginia-based nonprofit Friends of the Washington Statue, which aims to preserve the statue for future generations.
6. <https://www.alamy.com/statue-of-george-washington-in-trafalgar-square-london-replica-of-the-original-by-jean-antoine-houdon-given-by-the-commonwealth-of-virginia-in-1921-image365227549.html> - A photograph of the George Washington Statue in Trafalgar Square, London, depicting the replica of the original by Jean-Antoine Houdon. The statue was presented by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1921 and stands as a symbol of the 'Special Relationship' between the United States and the United Kingdom. The image captures the statue's prominent position in front of the National Gallery, highlighting its historical and cultural significance.
7. <https://washingtonstatue.org/history/> - The Friends of the Washington Statue (FWS) provide a detailed history of the George Washington Statue in London's Trafalgar Square. The statue, a gift from the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1914, was unveiled in 1921 to commemorate the centennial of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. The statue symbolizes the enduring friendship and shared values between the United States and the United Kingdom. FWS is currently undertaking a restoration project to preserve the statue for future generations.