

Bronte's Name: Our Trafalgar Connection



Horatio Lord Viscount Nelson, Duke of Bronte. Artist: Edward Bell.

Some common misconceptions about the naming of Bronte are that the area was named for the English literary sisters, the Brontes, and that one of the first owners of Bronte House, Robert Lowe, named the area after his home.

In fact the suburb's name is much more dramatic.

In 1799 British troops, led by Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, captured Bronte in Sicily and the King of Sicily bestowed upon him the title 'Duke of Bronte in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies' and gave him lands on the island. Sicily's Bronte is located slightly northwest of Mount Etna, near the Simeto River.

Nelson is remembered as a powerful and charismatic military figure, famous for his participation in the Napoleonic Wars, most notably in the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar during which he was killed.

Nelson was adored throughout the British Commonwealth and his death was dramatic news. His influence lives on, with the Royal Navy celebrating Trafalgar Day each year where a toast is made to 'his immortal memory' and his personal flagship kept on active commission in his honour. The bullet that took his life is on display in the Grand Vestibule in Windsor Castle.

He is remembered locally, not only in the name of Bronte (the suburb and the beach), but in Trafalgar Street, Nelson Avenue and Bronte Road. The bay fronting the beach is Nelson Bay.

The earliest reference to the name of Bronte for the Waverley suburb occurs in 1857 when land for sale in the area was advertised as the Bronte Estate.

Nelson's full titles, as inscribed on his coffin, were: The Most Noble Lord Horatio Nelson, Viscount and Baron Nelson, of the Nile and of Burnham Thorpe in the County of Norfolk, Baron Nelson of the Nile and of Hillborough in the said County, Knight of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Vice Admiral of the White Squadron of the Fleet, Commander in Chief of his Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the Mediterranean, Duke of Bronte in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Knight Grand Cross of the Sicilian Order of St Ferdinand and of Merit, Member of the Ottoman Order of the Crescent, Knight Grand Commander of the Order of St. Joachim.

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