

Living in 1950s Britain - Timeline

1950

C. S. Lewis published *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

British troops were sent to Korea, they fought with American forces as the first military action of the Cold War. Around 60,000 members of the British armed forces served, many were National Servicemen.

1951

Winston Churchill became Conservative Prime Minister, aged 77 years after leading the country during the Second World War.

On the 100 years anniversary of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Festival of Britain in 1951 showcased British achievement since the Second World War. This was a bright look at the future. The festival celebrated the arts, sciences and architecture. The Royal Festival Hall, on the Southbank was built as part of the Festival and remains today as part of the South Bank development on the Thames.

Two members of a Soviet spy ring Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess escaped to Moscow. They infiltrated the intelligence system in Britain and passed information to the Soviets during Second World War and start of the Cold War.

The UK's first National Park, the Peak District was introduced. This was soon followed by the Lake District, Snowdonia and Dartmoor. National Parks protected by the government, allow the public to visit areas of great natural beauty, plants, or animals.

The European Coal and Steel Community founded, the forerunner of the European Union.

1952

King George VI died, Britain's wartime monarch. Elizabeth, his eldest daughter became Queen Elizabeth II, our longest reigning monarch

4,000 people die in London's 'Great Smog'

Britain tested an atom bomb in the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Western Australia.

1953

James Watson and Francis Crick discover the structure of DNA and how it served as the 'building blocks' of life.

Ian Fleming published the first James Bond book, *Casino Royale*.

New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Tenzing Norgay are the first to reach the summit of Everest.

The DH.106 Comet launched as the world's first commercial jet airliner.

New edition of the highway-code was published as there more cars on the roads.

1954

Medical student Roger Bannister ran a mile in under 4 minutes.

Rationing, in place since the Second World War ended.

1955	Winston Churchill resigns due to ill health, Anthony Eden takes over as Prime Minister.
	Television with adverts began, the first commercial channel was ITV.
	Mary Quant opened her first shop, 'Bazaar' in Chelsea, London.
	Ruth Ellis was the last woman to be hanged in Britain. Her execution played a major part in the movement to abolish the death penalty.
	USSR forms the Warsaw Pact, in response to NATO.
1956	The Clean Air Act was introduced in response to London's Great Smog of 1952 to prevent pollution from smoke.
	Britain's first nuclear power station at Windscale.
	Dodie Smith published <i>101 Dalmatians</i> .
	Suez Crisis - Britain and France invade Egypt after the Suez Canal is nationalised, but are forced to withdraw under American pressure.
	Elvis Presley has his first hit in the UK, <i>Heartbreak Hotel</i> .
1957	Anthony Eden resigned. Harold MacMillan became Prime Minister and said " <i>most of our people have never had it so good</i> ".
	The Gold Coast became the first African state to become independent of Britain, renamed Ghana.
	The Treaty of Rome signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany created the European Economic Community, later the E.U.
1958	22 out of 40 people on board BEA Flight 609 died at take-off from Munich airport. Those killed included eight members of Manchester United's football team who were nicknamed 'the Busby Babes'.
	Britain's first motorway opens, the Preston by-pass, a section of the M6. This motorway now covers 230 miles from the Midlands to the Scottish border.
	Britain's first parking meters introduced in Mayfair, London.
	Michael Bond published <i>A Bear Called Paddington</i> .
	Europe feared nuclear conflict in the 1950s. CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, was launched in London.
1959	The first Mini motor car was built by British Motoring Corporation, became an icon for the 1960s. The cars used less petrol and were a cheaper to run!
	The first postcodes introduced by the Post Office in Norwich.
	Stevenage had been designated as Britain's first New Town. It was built with the first traffic-free shopping zone which was officially opened in 1959 by the Queen Elizabeth II.